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THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

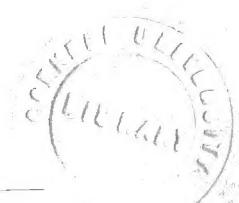
EDITED BY THE
VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE
REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH
INTRODUCTIONS
BY THE

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—**VERY REV. PRINCIPAL J. TULLOCH, D.D.—REV. CANON G. RAWLINSON, M.A.**
—**REV. A. PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.**

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LVS



THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

REV. CANON H. D. M. SPENCE, M.A.,

VICAR AND RURAL DEAN OF ST. PANCRAS, AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD
BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

I. CHRONICLES.

Exposition and Homiletics:

BY REV. PROFESSOR P. C. BARKER, M.A., LL.B.

Homilies by Various Authors:

REV. PROF. J. R. THOMSON, M.A.

REV. R. TUCK, B.A.

REV. W. CLARKSON, B.A.

REV. F. WHITFIELD, M.A.

REV. RICHARD GLOVER.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
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THE FIRST BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. TITLE.

1. The Hebrew title of the Chronicles is רְבָרִי חִיּוּמִים. The literal translation of the title is “Verba dierum;” and is so offered us by Jerome (born 331, died 422), in the preface to his work on *Kings*, which he named on account of its apologetic character, ‘*Prologus Galeatus in Libros Regum.*’ By Hilarius, Bishop of Poictiers (born circ. 300, died 368), in his ‘*Prologus in Librum Psalm.*’ the same title is translated, “*Sermones dierum.*” But there is no doubt that the idiomatic rendering would rather be, “*Acta, or Res gestae, dierum.*” This generic rendering will most nearly cover the different shades of meaning attaching to the Hebrew word, in all those cases in which the simplest translation, “words,” would not be the correct one, as, for instance, in ch. xxix. 29. In this verse the term occurs as many as four times. In the first instance it is impossible to render it as though it meant *words*, either literally or figuratively; and in the other three instances, if it were so rendered, it could only mean the *written* words of *history*. Some generic term, therefore, like “*history*,” or “*acts*,” will best express its significance, and probably the former of these better than the latter (‘*Memoria Rerum Gestarum*,’ Sallust, ‘*Jugurtha*,’ iv.). The exact form of words which constitutes the title of this book is not found at all in the work entitled *Samuel* (which is essentially one with *Kings*), and probably for no more important reason than this, that, being thus as it were the former half of one whole work, it had not arrived at the point where historical sources would need to be cited. In point of fact, it may be said that scarcely one such reference occurs in *Samuel*. In the Books of *Kings*, however, we find this expression not fewer than thirty-one times, beginning with 1 Kings xiv. 19. It is somewhat more remarkable that the exact phrase is found but once in *Chronicles* (ch. xxvii. 24). It is also found once in *Nehemiah*, and three times in *Esther*, and in almost all cases it is preceded by the word קְרֵר, a writing, or book.

2. The Septuagint (translation made probably about B.C. 280, at Alexandria, from older Hebrew manuscripts than any we have) provides as a title for the work now before us the word *Παραλειπομένων*—the substantive *βιβλίον*, accompanied or not by one of the first two ordinals, being understood before the genitive. The idea of the translators of the Septuagint, or of those, whoever they were, who fixed on this title, seems to have been that Chronicles had much of the appearance of supplementing former historical works. The Greek word is Latinized for us by Jerome, into *Prætermissorum*, *i.e.* the book of things *omitted*. But this is not all; for Jerome, in his ‘Epistle ad Paulinum,’ speaks of this work as “*Instrumenti Veteris Epitome*;” and in the same paragraph adds, a little further on, “*Per singula quippe nomina juncturasque Verborum, et prætermisso in Regum Libris tanguntur historiæ, et innumerabiles explicantur Evangelii quæstiones.*” Jerome, therefore, evidently had present to his mind the fuller description of Chronicles as an “*Epitome Instrumenti Veteris*,” as well as containing “*Prætermisso in Libris Regum Historiæ*.” To the same effect, we find in the ‘*Synopsis Scripturæ Sacrae*,’ a treatise ranked among the *dubia opera* of St. Athanasius (born *circ.* 298, died 373), the remark, “Many things which had been omitted in *Kings* are comprised in these books,” *i.e.* the Books of Chronicles. Once more, Isidore (born *circ.* 565, died 636), Bishop of Seville, says, “*Paralipomenon Græce dicitur, quod prætermisso vel reliquorum nos dicere possumus, quia ea quæ in Lege, vel in Regum Libris vel omissa vel non plene relata sunt, in isto summatini et breviter explicantia*” (‘*Origines*,’ vi. 1).

3. The Vulgate (executed by Jerome direct from the Hebrew text, about A.D. 385—405, and accepted since the time of Gregory I., 540—604, or since the Council of Trent, as the authentic and *current* text, thence termed Vulgate) shows in the place of the superscription, both the Hebrew and the Septuagint titles, *viz.* *Dibre Hajamin* and *Paralipomenon*, written respectively in ordinary Latin characters. Some later Latin ecclesiastical writers have used the words “*Ephemeridum libri*” as an equivalent of the Hebrew title. The appropriateness as a literal translation (‘*Cic. pro P. Quintio*,’ 18, 57) may suffice; but this will not be an idiomatic equivalent, nor could many portions of Chronicles be very fitly resembled to the contents of what we mean in the present day by *diary* or *calendar*.

4. Our own English title, “*Chronicles*,” dates from the time of Jerome. In the same passage of the ‘*Prologus Galeatus in Libros Regum*’ already referred to, Jerome appends to the Hebrew title the critique, “*Quod significans Chronicon totius divinae historiæ possumus appellare.*” Some of the editions of the Vulgate show this title, “*Chronica*,” or “*Chronicorum Liber*.” It would seem evident that the desiderated title should express, in the most general form, the idea of a *chronological record*; and perhaps the word *Chronicles* answers to this in the least exceptionable way. This title was adopted by Luther (born 1483, died 1546), and remains in use throughout the German Church. It may now be added that the treatment of the

matter of title, on the part both of Jerome and the Septuagint translators long before, evidences that what we call the Hebrew title was not in their opinion any part of the original work. If it had been, they would not have presumed so to tamper with it.

§ 2. THE ORIGINAL FORM OF THE WORK.

Chronicles was not originally divided into two parts in the Hebrew manuscripts. On the contrary, Jerome ('Ad Domnion et Rogatian') says that these remained undivided even in his time, although the division had been made by the Septuagint translators, and had long been recognized among those Churches that used the Septuagint. Jerome adopted the division in his Vulgate. Daniel Bomberg (born *cir.* 1480, died 1549) was the first to exhibit the division in a printed Hebrew Bible, in his edition at *Venice* (1518—1536), and from these sources the division has now become universal. The notes of the Masorites, from the sixth century, or even somewhat earlier, also witness to the then undivided state of the Hebrew manuscripts, by the incidental mention of the fact that the bisecting verse of the work was to be found at what we now call ch. xxvii. 25. Other evidences, were they needed, are somewhat abundantly offered in the ancient *enumeration* of the Old Testament books, by Josephus (A.D. 37—97), Origen (186—254), Jerome, and the Talmud (supposed to belong to the second century). In case, then, anything in the further consideration of this work should be found to depend upon it, we may remember that the work as originally composed was *one*, and embraced the whole sweep of Scripture history in an epitomized form—epitomized, indeed, in parts to the proportions of a mere recital of names—from Adam to a date succeeding the return from the Captivity. And the only remaining problem on this part of the subject is whether the Book of Ezra, as it certainly is an immediate continuation of the closing verses of Chronicles, was not also really *one* work with it, as is believed by many.

§ 3. THE DATE OF COMPILATION.

Assuming the integrity and unity of Chronicles, right down to the verses which appear with us as 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23, and excluding the theories of later interpolations, we undoubtedly possess certain time-marks which fix some irrefragable dates within which the work could not have been compiled. Thus, *e.g.*, beginning with the last, so far as its position in our work is concerned, the above-mentioned verses necessarily bring us to the year B.C. 539-8 (Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' 2nd edit., pp. 1, 23). Next, the ninth chapter opens, in our Hebrew text, with a form of statement which purports to terminate the subject of the genealogies (ending at different times, and in part with Hezekiah's reign) of the preceding eight chapters, by the mention of "the carrying away of Israel and Judah to Babylon, for their transgressions;" while the Masoretic text, placing a full

period at the word "Israel," makes the mention of Judah's captivity yet more emphatic as a thing of the past. The compiler then proceeds (vers. 2—34) to describe the course things took in the partial resettlement of the "Israelites, priests, Levites, and Nethinim, in their cities," on the return from the Captivity, and likewise of the "children of Judah and Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh, in Jerusalem." That there is no error in regarding this as the just sense of the passage becomes absolutely plain from the contents of Neh. xi. 3—22; further aided by vii. 45; xii. 25, 26; Ezra ii. 42. On this evidence, then, unless we gratuitously set down nearly the whole of ch. ix. as a later addition, we bring the compilation to a date subsequent to the return and the partial resettlement of those who returned, some "in the cities," and some "in Jerusalem." Once more, the remarkable genealogy of Zerubbabel (ch. iii. 17—24) is clear evidence in point. Either these verses must be proved to be an interpolation or addition by a later hand (as is held by Eichhorn, Dahler, Jahn, Keil), or we are brought down to a still lower date. Even when (with Bertheau) we have counted the six entries of ver. 21 as names all of *brothers*, six generations (Hananiah, Shechaniah, Shemaiah, Neariah, Elioenai, Hodaiah) *appear* to succeed Zerubbabel. However, Keil, Movers, Hävernick, and others think that Zerubbabel's genealogy in this passage really stops with the grandsons Pelatiah and Jesaiah. And there is some reason for supposing with Bishop Hervey (Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. 666, 667), that these six names should *not* stand as six generations after Zerubbabel. But if both of these theories be inadmissible, we are still not necessarily driven to Prideaux's position, that the six generations, and the average length which he assumes for them, will bring us to the time of Alexander the Great, B.C. 356—324 (Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 24; see also Ewald's 'Gesch. des V. Isr.,' i. 232). There can be little doubt that he over-estimates the average of Eastern generations, and, if this be reduced to *twenty* years ('Speaker's Commentary,' iii. 186, 187), we shall only be brought to a date varying between B.C. 420—410, within the probable lifetime of Nehemiah, and the very possible lifetime of Ezra. While, then, such a date as this is probably the latest which needs to be accepted, it stands to reason that the limit at the other extremity must not be placed simply at the time of the Return. In the nature of things, a work like the Chronicles, though but a matter of compilation, could not be executed offhand and rapidly at such a time. On the contrary, the unsettledness and the stir of the times would constitute the unlikeliest of conditions. Our general conclusion would be that, judging from internal evidence, the date of compilation *must* be placed between a limit some several years subsequent to the Return and the year B.C. 410 or thereabout—how much nearer the latter than the former still uncertain. It may be added that Movers proposes the date B.C. 400 ('Krit. Untersuch. über die Bibl. Chron.,' p. 28), and that Zunz calculates the date B.C. 260 ('Gottesd. Vort. der Juden,' § 31).

The evidence arising from style of authorship—of necessity limited and inconclusive in the matter of a compilation, but which, so far as it goes, favours the belief that Ezra himself was the compiler; and the evidence arising from style of diction, which exhibits many points of similarity with that of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther—certainly one Persian word, and not a few Aramaic peculiarities, such as the use of *he* for *aleph*, and the full forms of *kholem* and *khirik*—do indeed entirely harmonize with the position that the compilation was subsequent to the Return. Unfortunately, it is scarcely within their reach to point the exacter date with anything like certainty. Were it possible to identify Ezra positively as author or compiler, it need not be said that the limits of the inquiry would be very much narrowed. But it is just this which it is impossible to do. Of *Chronicles*, together with Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, Gesenius, in the Introduction to his ‘Hebrew Grammar,’ says that, as literary works, they are very “inferior to those of earlier date.”

§ 4. THE QUESTION OF AUTHOR OR COMPILER.

Who the author, or more strictly compiler, was is an undetermined question. The Talmud (iv. 3, in ‘Baba Bathra,’ 15, 1; Conder’s ‘Handbook to the Bible,’ p. xviii.) says, “Esra scripsit librum suum et genealogiam in Libro Chronicorum usque ad se.” Again, P. D. Huet (born 1630, died 1721), in his ‘Demonst. Evangelica ad S. D. iv. 14,’ says, “Esram libros Paralipomenōn lucubrasse, Ebreorum omnium est fama consentiens.” It seems easier to feel persuaded that the compiler of *Chronicles*, and the compiler of at all events large parts of the work known as the *Book of Ezra*, were one and the same person (and even that the two works might have once been designed for a continuous whole), than to feel confident who that compiler was. There seems to be at present no really satisfactory explanation of the fact that the last two verses of *Chronicles* and the first two of *Ezra* are almost identical. The circumstance has been urged as an argument for the identity of author, but, so far as it goes, it would indeed rather favour a contrary supposition. It is scarcely likely that an author would do such a thing, though much more naturally accounted for as done by the deliberate even if unadvised design of some reviser, or by the error of a transcriber of later date. It must be confessed, however, that there is no evidence forthcoming to support such a charge of error, nor any appearance of it on the face of the passage itself. On the other hand, some of the best of modern criticism fixes the first chapter of *Ezra* as the very part of the work which cannot own to the same hand as the other part or parts (though still it may have been the *insertion* of the same compiler), and assigns it, with vers. 9—23 of the last chapter of *Chronicles*, to the pen of Daniel. The resemblance of style to that of *Ezra* is indeed ample indication, as already seen, as regards the general *period* of the compilation of *Chronicles*; but it is insufficient to fix one compiler with the work of both. In fact, when we have reduced to the strictest compass the words and phrases

common to Chronicles and Ezra alone, we find that they obtain quite as much between Chronicles and the part of Ezra least certainly his own workmanship (i.—vi.), as the part which almost all critics have accepted as his. These points of resemblance, however, as presented by De Wette and others, are well worth notice, and may be judged of by some few specimens. Compare, for instance, ch. xv. 16 with Ezra iii. 12; ch. xvi. 40 with Ezra iii. 2; ch. xxiii. 3 with Ezra iii. 8; ch. xxviii. 17 with Ezra i. 10 and viii. 27; ch. xxix. 5, 9, with Ezra iii. 5; 2 Chron. iii. 3 with Ezra iii. 11; 2 Chron. v. 13 and vii. 3 with Ezra iii. 11; 2 Chron. xii. 14, xix. 3, and xxx. 19 with Ezra vii. 10; 2 Chron. xxvi. 15 with Ezra iii. 13; 2 Chron. xxix. 27 with Ezra iii. 10; 2 Chron. xxxv. 5 with Ezra vi. 18.

The following list ('Speaker's Commentary,' iii. 158) also deserves attention, viz.:—The constant use of the phrase "King of Persia;" the describing the Jewish people as "Judah and Benjamin," found out of Chronicles and Ezra only once (1 Kings xii. 23); the exclusive employment of the expressions, "the Sea of Joppa;" "take courage and do;" and the "daric" coin; the frequent employment of expressions, very rarely found elsewhere, as "Moses the man of God;" "Nethinim;" **לְבַד** to designate absolutely one "having understanding;" **לְבַשָּׁר**; and the three phrases, "expressly mentioned by their names" (ch. xii. 31; Ezra viii. 20, etc.), "prepared his heart to seek" (2 Chron. xii. 14; Ezra vii. 10, etc.), "that reacheth up to heaven" (2 Chron. xxviii. 9; Ezra ix. 6).

Though it cannot be said that we have the firmest ground of all on which to assert his workmanship of Ezra in Chronicles, yet these two things may be said with tolerable confidence: (1) that the more it may become possible to identify Ezra as the compiler of the whole of the book that goes by his name (except probably the first chapter), the more near may we feel that we are approaching a reasonable decision as to the compiler of Chronicles; and (2) that meantime the ancient traditional "consentiens fama," the indirect help of the Septuagint coming through the *Book of Ezra*, the points of resemblance of style, words, etc., some of which have been presented to view above, and the fact that the narrative "breaks off" during the lifetime of Ezra, combine to form no despicable force of evidence, even though it be not entirely conclusive, in favour of holding Ezra for the writer of Chronicles.

§ 5. THE ORIGINALS OF THE COMPILATION.

Although there are not a few interesting questions still unanswered on this subject, yet fortunately the compiler often refers with great distinctness to his authorities, *i.e.* to some of them. Before summarizing these, it may be most convenient to observe upon some of them, in the order in which they occur.

1. The compiler's first distinct allusion to an authority is found in ch. ix. 1; and it is the authority for the "genealogies of all Israel" which is there cited. These genealogies, if we lay special stress upon the word

“Israel,” have occupied the previous seven chapters (*i.e.* ch. ii. 1—viii. 40). And the authority cited appears, both in our Authorized Version and in our Hebrew text, as “The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.” But, as will be seen under the passage, the Masoretic pointing will give us rather, “The Book of the Kings of Israel” as the title intended by the compiler.

First, then, we observe either that this authority must, in fact, cover also the contents of ch. i., or that we have no distinct statement as to the originals of that most interesting chapter. On these, therefore, we are left to speculate for ourselves. Now, the resemblance between it and what we have in Genesis *in pari materia*, is in substance and in order, though certainly not always in form, so close and almost identical, that we might be content, if it were necessary, simply to take for granted that the Book of Genesis and others of the earlier books of the Old Testament were, so far as they went, the sufficient though unacknowledged originals. However, inasmuch as we find about a similar amount and closeness of resemblance to Genesis and the other earlier books of the Old Testament in other portions (as, for instance, in ch. ii.) of our genealogies, such as do come strictly within the limits of genealogies of *Israel*, and which, therefore, are covered by the authority now in question, it is at least possible that this latter may by this time have incorporated the earliest materials of all, and so far forth have been an example, which the compiler of Chronicles now follows. Up to this point, then, whatever other authorities may possibly have been put under contribution by the compiler (and evidently not a few of the most ancient documents and memoranda were among them), all that he himself answers for is what is described as “The Book of the Kings of Israel.”

Secondly, we may ask, what is known respecting this authority? What is it that is here intended by “The Book of the Kings of Israel”? This exact title, then, is found not at all in Kings, where, however, we do find above thirty times either the title, “The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah,” or “The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.” It is found in three places only in Chronicles, and under remarkable conditions in each instance. The first depends upon the Masoretic reading, as explained above (ch. ix. 1). The third shows the word קֶבֶר, in place of the familiar סֶפֶר (2 Chron. xxxiii. 18). And further, inasmuch as Manasseh, a King of Judah, is the person there in question, and inasmuch as the separate kingdom of Israel had collapsed now some eighty years, it can scarcely be that the title stands for a separate work of the kings of Israel as distinct from those of Judah. The second of the three passages (2 Chron. xx. 34) is doubly remarkable. Although Jehoshaphat, whose memoir is being spoken of, and his biographer, Jehu the prophet, the son of Hanani, are both of Judah, yet this latter prophesied principally to Israel; his writings, therefore, might have found their way possibly into a work that belonged distinctively to Israel, and, in fact, to say *this* may be the purport of the somewhat obscure last sentence of ver. 34. Three passages of this kind can scarcely be sufficient upon which to base the theory of the

existence of a separate work entitled, "The Book of the Kings of Israel," distinct from a work, for instance, so often quoted in Kings as "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel." Meanwhile we have reference made four times in Chronicles to "The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel," and three times to "The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah."

A careful examination of these seven occasions, and comparison of them with their parallel passages in Kings (2 Chron. xvi. 11 with 1 Kings xv. 23; 2 Chron. xxv. 26 with 2 Kings xiv. 18; 2 Chron. xxvii. 7 with 2 Kings xv. 36; 2 Chron. xxviii. 26 with 2 Kings xvi. 19; 2 Chron. xxxii. 32 with 2 Kings xx. 20; 2 Chron. xxxv. 27 with 2 Kings xxiii. 28; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 8 with 2 Kings xxiv. 5), show that all the cases in question are of kings of *Judah*, and that the authority cited in the parallel passages in Kings is always "The Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of *Judah*." These facts give strong countenance to the positions, (1) that it is the *same* authority substantially which is quoted, whether in Chronicles or Kings; and (2) that at the time of the compilation of Chronicles, the two *divisional* works mentioned so often in Kings had come to be quoted as one, with a somewhat abbreviated title, of which it was not absolutely material whether it were quoted as "The Books of the Kings of Judah and Israel" or as "The Books of the Kings of Israel and Judah." In this last way it certainly is quoted three times, even when it is a King of Judah to whom reference is being made (2 Chron. xxvii. 7; xxxv. 27; xxxvi. 8). This work must have been a full repertory of historical and biographical facts; for it is referred to not only as an authority, but repeatedly as the authority in which all minutiae may be found of "acts," "wars," and "ways" (2 Chron. xxvii. 7). Also that it was not coincident with any of our existing historical books is very clear from the fact that these latter are again and again found not to contain the very matters to which attention is directed (2 Chron. xxiv. 7; xxvii. 7; xxiii. 18, 19).

2. The second distinct allusion to authorities from which the compiler has drawn materials is found in our ch. xxix. 29. That no intermediate reference has occurred is easily explained. Ch. ix. was more a matter of the compiler's own hand, taken from comparatively recent and comparatively known documents. The matter of the short ch. x. will have been included in the authorities now quoted, as well as in the previously cited authority. But all the rest up to the present point is what clusters round the name of David. For this stretch of subject, then, the authorities used are now quoted as "The Acts, or History [Authorized Version, 'book'], of Samuel the Seer," "of Nathan the Prophet," "of Gad the Seer." To these may be added an incidental allusion to a work evidently known by the compiler, viz. "The *Chronicles of King David*" (ch. xxvii. 24). Little or nothing else is known of these specific works, except what may be gathered from their names and conjectured from the nature of the case. Yet the contrariety of opinion as to what they were is considerable. Some are very strongly of opinion that these are not histories written by Samuel, Nathan, and Gad

(Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' iii. 1126), but rather histories of them, and which therefore inevitably had much to say of David also. If on this theory it should appear remarkable that the authorship of those works is not attached to them, nor mentioned, this is but in harmony with the whole of the historical books of the Old Testament, with the exception of a portion of Ezra and of Nehemiah. Others think that in the work known with us as the Books of Samuel, and even of Kings, we have the above-named three or possibly even four "histories" and "chronicles" (Mover's 'Krit. Untersuch.,' 178; Horne's 'Introd.,' v. 48). If so, it would be a thing to tempt remark that a work (like Samuel) which had David for its chief subject, even to the extent of three quarters of it, should have come down by the name "Samuel" (he not being the author), whose history occupies only a sixth part of the whole. Nevertheless, this sixth part comes at the beginning, and may very conceivably be the explanation of the name which stands as the title. When, however, all is said, the somewhat irresistible impression produced by the passage containing these authorities is that they are quoted there, at all events, as separate works; and the allusion to the "Chronicles of King David" (ch. xxvii. 24) seems to confirm this reading. Lastly, the mode of reference to these authorities is observable. The very common formula of "the rest of the acts," etc. (2 Chron. ix. 29—31), is not employed here, but only "the acts," or better, "the history." We are left, therefore, quite undirected as to the proportion of his materials which the compiler of Chronicles drew from these sources, as also to the amount of his indebtedness to the works known with us as the Books of Samuel and Kings. And the interesting question is left unanswered, or anything but conclusively answered, whether any, and if so what, of the original authorities of Samuel and Kings were still safe at the time of the compilation of Chronicles, and may have been presumably common sources for both Samuel and Kings on the one hand, and now much later for our Chronicles. Among those who have with the greatest warmth espoused the position that our compiler used largely as his authorities the canonical Books of Samuel and Kings, are Movers, De Wette, Ewald, Bleek, and Graf; and the direct contrary has been stoutly maintained by Hävernick, Bertheau, Dillmann, and Keil.

3. The remaining references to authorities on the part of the compiler of Chronicles come more thickly when the work has passed well beyond its middle point. They are in the order of their occurring, as follows:—(1) The Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite (2 Chron. ix. 29). (2) The Visions of Iddo the Seer, against Jeroboam (ibid.). (3) The Acts or History of Shemaiah the Prophet (2 Chron. xii. 15). (4) The Acts or History of Iddo the Seer, concerning Genealogies (ibid.). (5) The Commentary of the Prophet Iddo (2 Chron. xiii. 22). (6) The Acts or History of Jehu the son of Hanani (2 Chron. xx. 34). (7) The Commentary of the Book of the Kings (2 Chron. xxiv. 27). (8) Isaiah the Prophet, on Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 22). (9) The Vision of Isaiah the Prophet (2 Chron. xxxii. 32). (10) The Acts or History of the Seers (Hosai?); 2 Chron. xxxiii. 19.

(a) The word found in the above list (5), (7) as "commentary" (מִרְשָׁת) is with little doubt the right reading of what appears as "story" in our Authorized Version. Though it is not found in this exact form elsewhere in the Old Testament, yet the verbal root is found several times, and in a sense which harmonizes with this interpretation. The rabbinic use of the word, however, determines this rendering of "commentary," or "a study" upon a subject.

(b) Again, of the Hosai mentioned in the above list (10) nothing is found elsewhere. There can be little doubt that the word is not the name of a person, but that it is either the mere corruption of some copyist or an erroneous emendation upon the just repetition of the expression, "the words of the seers," in the preceding verse. For this view Bertheau argues in his "Introduction."

Now, the whole of the above references to authorities seem to be clear of any ambiguity as regards their form of title, unless possibly the titles (3), (4), (6), (10), which resemble some already discussed, viz. "The Acts or History of Samuel the Seer," etc. [2]. Yet surely the latter part of the titles (4) and (6) must be allowed to deliver them also from ambiguity. They must mean the histories written by Iddo and Jehu respectively. May not this reasonably determine all the other cases of the titles which contain the word "acts" or "history," especially when compared with the title "chronicles," as e.g. ch. xxvii. 24, where there need be no supposition that David was the writer?

The works themselves were evidently individual treatises on individual reigns or individual characters and periods of the nation's history. They were written probably exclusively by various prophets, even as such are mentioned for the larger number of them. The various times and subjects with which they had to do are made sufficiently plain on reference to each citation severally. As individual treatises, they would be likely enough to contain an amount and a kind of detail which a more general history, written after the lapse of some time, would be sure to exclude. The "Chronicles of King David" and the "Commentary of the Book of Kings" may be surmised to have been somewhat less specific in style of treatment, and somewhat wider in their range, than most of the others. Traces of the absorption of some of these into a more general compilation are with considerable reason believed to be found in a passage already referred to in connection with the subject (2 Chron. xx. 34); and also, though this is not apparent from the reading of our Authorized Version, in 2 Chron. xxxii. 32.

In addition to the authorities quoted as though the compiler of Chronicles had been actually indebted to them, allusion is found to some others, on which he had not personally drawn, such as "The Writing of Elijah the Prophet" to Jehoram (2 Chron. xxi. 12); and "The Lamentations," presumably written by Jeremiah, but not his work that goes by the title in our canon (2 Chron. xxxv. 25). To these might be added one remove further, however, "The Writing (מִרְשָׁת) of David" and "The Writing (מִרְשָׁת) of Solomon" (2 Chron. xxxv. 4). These additional kinds of references may serve

to show that a little store at all events of wealth in this sort existed once. Nor is it absolutely impossible that what has been lost may yet come to light.

§ 6. THE CONTENTS AND OBJECT OF THE WORK.

1. As regards the *contents* of Chronicles, they may, perhaps, be best divided into three parts.

(1) Lists of genealogies, beginning from the very first, coming down to the tribes, and descending to different points in the history of these respectively (though neglecting Dan and Zebulon), to the time of the Captivity, and in some instances even later. With these genealogies are intermingled the ancient settlements of families and tribes and heads of houses, and a few brief but occasionally very significant touches of history. This portion occupies ch. i.—vii.

This is succeeded (after a brief statement of the Captivity and the Return) by (2) an imperfect skeleton sketch of the re-establishment in their ancient inheritances and settlements, and in some cases religious offices, of such families as returned, according to the houses of their fathers. This portion occupies only a part of one chapter, viz. ch. ix. 1—34.

(3) The third portion extends from ch. ix. 35 right to the end of the work. It consists of a connected history of the kingdom of Judah, introduced very naturally (ch. ix. 35—44) by a repetition of that genealogical table which exhibited (ch. viii. 29—38) the name and pedigree of Saul. Passing lightly over Saul, it dwells at special length on the career and reign of David, thence through all his successors of the line of Judah to Zedekiah, to the time of the Captivity and in effect, by virtue of its closing verses, to the dawn of the restored state.

One of the most interesting aspects under which to view the contents of this book is that which exhibits their relation to those of the works known as the Books of Samuel and Kings. The difference between the contents of these severally may be here noticed as a subject quite distinct from the question whether the compiler of Chronicles adopted direct from them those parts of his own work which are exactly similar to them—the negative reply to which question seems by far the more probable to us. The following is a list, tabulated by Dr. Davidson, of the chief passages found in Chronicles and not found in Samuel or Kings, viz. :—Ch. xii.; xxii.; xxiii.—xxvi.; xxvii.; xxviii.; xxix.; 2 Chron. xi. 5—23; xiii. 2—23; xiv. 8—14; xv. 1—15; xvi. 7—10; xvii.; xix.; xx. 1—30; xxi. 2—4, 11—19; xxiv. 15—22; xxv. 5—10, 14—16; xxvi. 6—16; xxvii. 5, 6; xxx. 1—27; xxxi. 2—21; xxxiii. 11—13

Side by side it may be convenient to place a list of the chief matters not found in Chronicles but found in Samuel or Kings, viz. :—2 Sam. i.—iv.; vi. 20—25; ix., xi. 2—xii. 25; xiii.—xx.; xxi. 1—14, 15—17; xxii.; xxiii.; 1 Kings i.; ii. 1—9, 26—46; iii. 1, 16—28; iv.; vii. 1—12, 13—39; viii. 56—61; xi. 1—13, 14—40; 2 Kings xii. 17, 18; xvi. 5—18; xviii. 4—8.

So also the accounts of *Chronicles* are occasionally much *fuller*, as e.g. ch. xiii., xv., xvi., compared with 2 Sam. vi.

The order of not a few narratives in *Chronicles* differs from that found in *Samuel* or *Kings*. The chief of these, also furnished by Davidson, may be seen from comparing the following references *respectively*, viz.:—Ch. xi. 1—9, 10—47; xiii.; xiv.; 2 Chron. i. 3—13, 14—17; ii., with 2 Sam. vi. 1—10; xxiii. 8—10; vi. 3—11; v. 11—25; vi. 12—19; 1 Kings iii. 4—14; x. 26—29; v.

Once more, there is a tendency manifested in *Chronicles* to detail lists of other names, quite outside the genealogy tables, and some of which are not found elsewhere. They are lists of persons connected with army, or temple, or with the families of individual kings. The following are some of the chief of such lists, viz.:—Ch. xi. 26—47; xii. 1—14; xiv. 4—7; xv. 5—11, 17—24; xix. 15—17; xxiv. 7—18; xxv. 9—31; xxvi. 14—19; xxvii. 2—15, 16—22, 25—31; 2 Chron. xi. 5—10, 18—20; xvii. 7—18; xix. 11; xxi. 2; xxiii. 1; xxvi. 11; xxviii. 7, 12; xxix. 12—14; xxxi. 12—15; xxxiv. 8, 12; xxxv. 8, 9.

2. The exact *object* of the work is nowhere stated with authority. The internal evidence, however, as to this, if not absolute, is of a character far from obscure. That evidence negatives at once any such theory of a merely supplemental character as might seem to be suggested by the Septuagint title. Although, in point of fact, the compiler of *Chronicles* certainly makes considerable additions, as may be easily tested from the above lists, yet, on the other hand, the identical *repetitions* (as in that case they would be) are too many to consist with such a theory, and the additions themselves have no appearance of being merely of a supplemental character. Nor, again, can that be esteemed a work supplemental to our *Samuel* and *Kings*, which occupies itself almost exclusively with the fortunes of the kingdom of Judah, and has nothing to say of the kingdom of Israel, except where the career of any of its kings may involve it specially with the history of Judah. This, then, reveals the first manifest token of the object of *Chronicles*. From the time that it leaves its early chapters of genealogies, it is concerned with the great and enduring line of Judah. Supposing that its place were, as some say, last in the whole Old Testament canon, and thereby nearest the dawn of New Testament events, and in particular the birth of Christ, so much the more in harmony would its place be with its contents.

There are, however, probably few books in Scripture which have deeper or distincter marks of individual character, and of specific and well-outlined object. Occupied as it is with the line of Judah, we have been already forewarned, *first*, in the points at which some of the genealogies terminate, and then by the contents of ch. ix., that the whole retrospect is taken from a date subsequent to the Captivity and the return from Babylon. Though very much of the whole work was, without doubt, drawn from original sources—sources contemporary or nearly so with the events successively recorded—yet its general point of view as a compilation was

essentially free from the obscuring influences liable to gather round the most scrupulous historian who lives in or very near to the times and events he would describe. Again, the more numerous and abundant the contemporaneous or original sources of information to the hand of the writer of a new shape of history, the more certain would it appear that he must have had some individual or special object in his mind in writing. Now, if there were none other conceivable, this might have been accepted as sufficient—that Judah should have its written national history to itself, since in itself the succession and vitality of empire now manifestly lay, and since promise and prophecy marked it as the line in which the Messiah was to come. Meantime, to the five-sixths of the whole work occupied almost exclusively with the history of Judah, it was quite natural nevertheless to prefix the general and complete genealogies of the whole people, as well as the earliest genealogies of all.

Somewhat closer examination, however, of the contents of the work seems abundantly sufficient to indicate additional and very probable explanations of the writing of it. The theocratic tone is uniformly and much more distinctly audible from beginning to end. Great attention is visibly paid through the whole course of the history to matters of sacerdotal interest, and to matters of an ecclesiastical character generally, and to temple worship. The religious place, privileges, duties of the nation are redeemed to view prominently, and this without the slightest appearance of priestly design and priestly ambition, as has nevertheless been unscrupulously asserted (so De Wette, in his 'Einleitung,' § 190). On the contrary, the exact appearance of what is written is that which might be expected, in the language of such teachers as would make a wise use, and would help others to make a wise use, of the suffering, discipline, and punishment through which, for neglect of those very things, they had been caused to pass. Any historian who belonged himself to the nation, and who wrote subsequently to the return from the Captivity, whether he were priest, Levite, or prophet, would surely wish to encourage and restore the spirit of the people. But to this very end he would write also with the desire to *reform*, would point repeatedly to the causes which had brought the nation to disgrace and ruin, would take every opportunity of holding up to memory the warnings and rebukes and neglected hortatory matter which had been once and again addressed to the decadent nation, and would lay stress upon those religious observances which would be strength and safety to the nation in the future. Moreover, with the temple rebuilt, nothing less could be expected than that its services and all its officers and their "courses" should be dwelt upon at considerable length.

Now, these are the indications which the work presents. It looks like the charter of the reconstruction of a shattered kingdom on its proper historical basis—that basis one pre-eminently of an ecclesiastical character or type. There is, indeed, one general pervading aspect belonging to *Chronicles*, which might well justify the character of *supplemental* which has

been given to it. It may be said to be supplemental, not as to details and historical events, but as to restoring the balance of the ecclesiastical by the side of the prophetical or even political, and bringing to view the Church, which was the real framework of that state. Such seems to be the impression constantly made; and it is an impression not unfrequently caused as much by the remarkable omissions (as, for instance, of some of David's greatest offences and sins as an individual, yet non-ecclesiastical in their essence) of the history as by what is present and emphatically recorded.

Once more, the satisfactory resettlement, not only of all the force of the civil service, and service of the temple already alluded to, but also of the returned people and families according to the old and time-honoured territorial arrangements, must have often asked a ready reference to some compendious authority. It may be true enough that the old documents and archives relating in the most authoritative manner to the subject were neither destroyed nor at this time even temporarily lost or mislaid, else how could the materials of the present work have been obtained with sufficient certainty and commanded sufficient confidence? But the occasions that would arise for referring to such documents must have now been frequent as compared with the generations before the Captivity. And a proportionate need hence sprang up for a work of easy reference. And, furthermore, let it be granted that the *Chronicles* compilation was not completed till after the greater part by far of the returned families had already located themselves as best they could, and the servants and officers of the temple had become reinstated in due course and succession; yet a compendious work, to which reference could easily be made by appointed authorities, would be of amazing value for preventing strife, affording satisfaction, and proving title in time to come. This is provided manifestly by this book, and it is provided with all the help of the authority which would flow from family genealogies of oldest time, and from territorial arrangements of originally Divine appointment.

§ 7. THE HISTORICAL CREDIBILITY OF THE WORK.

The historical credibility of *Chronicles* and the trustworthiness of the writer have been strenuously attacked. De Wette, in two works (the 'Beitrage' and 'Einleitung'), has made himself the leader of these attacks. And though, indeed, he has gone far to leave nothing for others to say in the same direction, yet Gramberg and Gesenius have been among his followers, and Theodore Parker, in his translation of the 'Einleitung,' has in some respects even outdone him. These, on the one side, have met with able responders in Dahler, Movers, Keil, Davidson, and Bishop Hervey. The *general* charges of De Wette are two in number. (1) That the compiler, in an unscrupulous indulgence of strong Levitical prejudices, designedly misleads, writing up everything belonging to Judah that looked in the ecclesiastical direction, and writing down everything belonging to

Israel. **D**e Wette prefers even to deny him the loophole of being himself unconsciously misled by the strength of his alleged Levitical *animus*. (2) And that he has a weak leaning to the “supernatural,” in obedience to which he leans to the temptation of both inventing and exaggerating.

The first of these charges may be considered sufficiently disposed of by the far different position already taken in the previous section—one which admits of being amply sustained, and which explains the civil and religious features of the critical and important period of history, at some date in which this compilation must have been made. An almost indefinite amount of confirmation and illustration of that position might be produced; and the moral evidence points with remarkable clearness to it. In the history of the reforming nation there must have come the time and the circumstances to postulate exactly such a work. Without any symptom of collusion, the internal indications of this work are such as to harmonize with the supposed time and circumstances. And the account to be offered of the reasons of the prominence given to Judah, and to the matters of the temple services, and so forth, is sufficient to reduce the views of De Wette to little better than gratuitous, or at least blinded, assumptions; while there is nothing that can even simulate the appearance of *evidence* of the partiality of untruthfulness towards Judah or of prejudice against Israel. This may be *asserted*, but fails of anything like proof, when brought to the only test which we have, viz. in Samuel and Kings, among the many which we might have, in the numerous originals to which the compiler so often refers. And for these latter we should indeed be compelled to wait before it would be possible to condemn the writer of Chronicles as untruthful.

And as to the addictedness to the supernatural, alleged against him, perhaps even a more decisive reply can be furnished. For first, the total amount of matter of this kind in Chronicles is much less than in the earlier work, owing to the absence of those narrations of the sort which concern *Israel*, and which, in Kings, are not few in number. But further, respecting such as belong to Judah alone, the following references (see ‘Speaker’s Commentary’), showing some miracle-narratives peculiar to Chronicles:—Ch. xxi. 26; 2 Chron. vii. 1; xiii. 14—17; xiv. 11—13; xx. 15—24; xxi. 12—19; are surely sufficiently counterbalanced by the absence of the following:—1 Kings xi. 29—39; 2 Kings iii. 14—24; xix. 20—34; xx. 16—18; xxiii. 15—17; and by the very spare allusion to Hezekiah’s miraculous recovery (2 Chron. xxii. 24 compared with 2 Kings xx. 1—11).

Of less vague charges made by the same school against the trustworthiness of the writer of Chronicles, instanced in particular passages, and of the nature of alleged *contradictions*, the treatment will be found, for the most part, under the particular passages in question. The following three lists, however, not altogether exhaustive, but conveniently classified by Canon G. Rawlinson, will serve to indicate the kind and the number of supposed contradictions, as well as the places where they are individually treated:—

1. Instances of alleged *self-contradiction*. Compare the following couplets:—(1) 2 Chron. xiv. 3, 5 with xv. 17; (2) xvii. 6 with xx. 33; (3) xxx. 26 with xxxv. 18; (4) xxviii. 1 with 7. Now, as nothing would more detract, and with justice, from the authority of any historian than instances of well-ascertained self-contradiction, it is necessary closely to examine these. (1) and (2). The first two are of an exactly similar kind. At the beginning of the long reigns of two kings (Asa, who reigned forty-one years, and Jehoshaphat, who reigned twenty-five), it is said that the king in question “took away the high places,” and in the former of these two reigns, it is repeated with emphasis of Asa, that “he took away out of *all the cities* of Judah the high places.” At or towards the end of each reign, it is said, “But” or “howbeit the high places were not taken away.” The Hebrew text is in close accord with the rendering of our Authorized Version. Compare also 1 Kings xv. 12, 14, where the words of the suspected “self-contradiction” are just avoided. Surely there is no necessary self-contradiction to be detected here. The one expression purports to say that, at the beginning of a long reign, the king “took away,” *i.e.* ordered to be taken away, “the high places;” but that, at the end, it was found that the evil had not been effectually uprooted, and that, whatever had been the proclamation and the “perfect”-hearted purpose of the king, no doubt more or less *successful for a time*, the people had probably enough by relapse given in to the habit of using the “high places.” There is no need to suppose, with Movers, Dahler, Keil, and Bertheau, that two kinds of high places are referred to in these passages, even if there were at any time two such kinds. And it is not to be overlooked that, while strictly a self-contradiction would only have lain had it been said both that the “king did take away,” and then elsewhere that he did “not take away,” high places, on the contrary, the connection in both cases favours the view we have taken. For in the instance of Asa, several verses of ch. xiv. have just been employed to describe the earnest endeavours of the king to obtain the *co-operation* of his people; while in the case of Jehoshaphat the antithesis is expressed in so many words (2 Chron. xx. 32, 33), that while “Asa did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, . . . the high places were *not removed*: *for as yet the people* had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers.” The natural conclusion is that the two kings Asa and Jehoshaphat had done their part and had done their best, but had not permanently carried their people with them. (3) Again, there is no adequate foundation for the allegation of self-contradiction in the language of 2 Chron. xxx. 26 and xxxv. 18. In the first place, the strict language of the former of these passages only says that there had not been “like” great joy in Jerusalem since the “time of Solomon.” Let it, however, be granted that the festival itself is what is intended, and there is no denial whatsoever of such a feast having been held, but only of one accompanied by so much gladness and spirit and general joy. And in like manner the assertion of ver. 18 in ch. xxxv. can be understood to amount to this, that the feast of Josiah’s time

surpassed even that of Hezekiah's, while the date to which the memory is referred remounts not simply to Solomon's time, but to the "days of Samuel the prophet." (4) And, once more, 2 Chron. xxviii. 7 offers no self-contradiction whatever. Rather the only difficulty lies in choosing between several manifest interpretations, e.g. if Maaseiah designates the son of the reigning king, viz. Ahaz, the *un*mentioned time of his being slain may have been towards the end of Ahaz's sixteen-year reign, when his son may easily have been upwards of sixteen years of age, though Ahaz did mount the throne aged twenty only (ver. 1). Then, again, the probability is strong that Maaseiah was, in fact, son of the previous king, Jotham, and that the expression "king's son" designates no natural relationship, but an office so termed held by him. The very verse favours the explanation in its mention of the other two slain, one as "governor of the house," the other as "next to the king;" and is more confirmed by the consideration of the only other occurrence of the phrase (1 Kings xxii. 26). Compare also 2 Kings xxiv. 12 with Jer. xxix. 2. W. Aldis Wright, in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' well instances the expression "queen dowager."

2. Instances of some asserted contradictions of other Scriptures on the part of the writer of Chronicles. Compare the following couplets:—Ch. iii. 15 with 2 Kings xxiii. 31, 36; ch. iii. 19 with Ezra iii. 2; ch. x. 6 with 2 Sam. ii. 8; ch. xiv. 12 with 2 Sam. v. 21; ch. xxi. 5 with 2 Sam. xxiv. 9; ch. xxi. 6 with 2 Sam. xxiv. 8, 9; ch. xxi. 25 with 2 Sam. xxiv. 25; ch. xxii. 8 with 2 Sam. vii. 5; ch. xxii. 14 with 1 Kings v. 17, 18; ch. xxvii. 1—15 with 2 Sam. xv. 18; 2 Chron. xiv. 2—5 with 1 Kings xv. 14; 2 Chron. xvii. 6 with 1 Kings xxii. 43; 2 Chron. xxii. 9 with 2 Kings ix. 27; 2 Chron. xxiii. 1—11 with 2 Kings xi. 4—12; 2 Chron. xxviii. 5 with 2 Kings xvi. 5; 2 Chron. xxviii. 20 with 2 Kings xvi. 7; 2 Chron. xxx. 26 with 2 Kings xxiii. 22; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11—17 with 2 Kings xxi. 1—17; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3—7 with 2 Kings xxiii. 4. The above will be found to be dealt with in the order of the text.

3. Instances of supposed errors of the writer of Chronicles. Compare the following couplets:—Ch. iv. 31 with Josh. xvi. 36 and xix. 6; ch. xi. 23 with 2 Sam. xxiii. 21; 2 Chron. ix. 12 with 1 Kings x. 13; 2 Chron. ix. 14 with 1 Kings x. 15; 2 Chron. xxxv. 25 with canonical Book of Lamentations; 2 Chron. ix. 21 and xx. 37 with 1 Kings x. 22 and xxii. 48. A consideration of such difficulty as any of these passages *may be* thought to present will also be found under chapter and verse.

In conclusion, it may be affirmed safely that the most candid and at the same time the most searching examination of the objections made to Chronicles on the score of authenticity, by such opponents as have been under notice, leads to the conviction that not one of these objections can hold its own. There are, indeed, several numerical inconsistencies (e.g. ch. xi. 11; xviii. 4; xix. 18; compared with 2 Sam. xxiii. 8; viii. 4; x. 18, respectively; and 2 Chron. viii. 18; xxii. 2; xxxvi. 9; compared with 1 Kings iv. 28; 2 Kings viii. 26; xxiv. 8, respectively), which postulate for their

only explanation the imperfect state of some of our Hebrew manuscripts, and especially in the passages which contain *numbers*. But this defect and misfortune are by no means peculiar to Chronicles. But for the rest, though cautious criticism may justly decline to dogmatize as to which of two or three possible ways out of a difficulty may be *the way*, and may constitute *the explanation*, there is no real lack of *legitimate* methods of escape. Out of a grand total of some thirty loudly proclaimed inconsistencies, there are not more than a fourth part at the outside which present any real difficulty. And of these, with perhaps one exception (2 Chron. xx. 36), one or other of alternative solutions of each problem will appear not less reasonable than plausible. The examination may justly tend to increase and not to diminish our faith in Chronicles and the writer thereof. Though it refuses to own to the description of anything merely supplemental to the preceding historical books, it is a most interesting and valuable complement to them.

§ 8. THE EVIDENCES OF ENTIRETY AND OF IDENTITY OF AUTHORSHIP IN CHRONICLES.

These two subjects may be best considered in close connection with one another. As to the former of them, there seems nothing to excite so much as an inquiry or suspicion until we reach the very close of the work, or that which at the present stands as the close. The points from which the beginning is made speaks for itself. The connecting links of the genealogies, comprising (according to our threefold classification) the first part with the second, and that of the second with the third—the prolonged historical portion, which forms the bulk of the work—are as natural as they are evident. The historical part itself is continuous, and embraces in due order of relation that which would be expected at the hands of a writer who kept a certain defined object steadily and consistently in view. There is no abrupt break and no unaccountable gap in the course of it. The same satisfaction, however, cannot be felt when we approach the close. There is some appearance of hurry in the treatment of the history of the last few kings. Next, the fact of the last two verses of the work, as it now stands, being identical with the opening verses of Ezra, is certainly startling and unnatural. If, therefore, we close the book with the verse that precedes them, we close it with a statement of the Captivity, it is true, but not of the Return, which is the very thing for which we should have looked. Perhaps it might appear safest to leave such a difficulty, which is of no pressing practical import, without the pretence of any very confident solution. Yet, were it not that it seemed a too convenient adaptation to the circumstances of the case, there is a great deal to lead to the view very generally assumed, as well by critics generally hostile to the character of the work (as De Wette) as by others (like Movers, Ewald, etc.) of a very contrary tone of criticism. According to this view, Chronicles, originally finding its legitimate termination with the chapters now ranked as the Book of Ezra, suffers truncation.

there, and the last two verses remain an indication of the severance there effected. Meantime Ezra, made into a separate book, was placed where in the Hebrew canon we find it, in due historical order, *after* Daniel (the contents of which consist of some account of the period of the Captivity) and *before* Nehemiah, while Chronicles is relegated to the position of last in the canon in the Hebrew, though not last in our canon. Such an explanation postulates a certain anxiety to put the contents of Daniel into a convenient position at the expense of putting Chronicles into an unjust position, and leaving it with an inconsequential termination, and the management suggests rather mismanagement. However, it is none the less the fact that Chronicles is found in the position above described. It may suffice to point out that, whatever may be the fact or the actual explanation respecting the original *order*, no history itself is deficient which is a matter of prime significance. For in Chronicles, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, we have a certain *catena* of history from creation, through the period of the Captivity, to the rebuilding of the temple and the resettlement of Judah in the land after the Captivity.

The interesting point of the substantial unity of Chronicles is strikingly witnessed to in the internal evidence furnished by the work. Those very features which might have been expected to militate against both the probability of its unity, and especially against facility in proving that unity, do in fact contribute to the furtherance of that proof. It can scarcely be going too far to say that, in style and spirit, it is unmistakably *one*. It is most true that the very nature of genealogical matter might have been expected to render it almost out of the question to detect what sort of hand had been employed upon it, still less to pronounce with any confidence as to the sameness of the hand with that which penned the remaining and more historical part of the work. But on the contrary, the genealogical and other tables, as well (1) by what they bring into prominence or else keep in the shade or even entirely omit, as (2) by the distinct matter which they contain in the shape of interspersed reflections and moral points made and religious lessons taught, go to exhibit strongly the evidence of unity. The less such modes of overcoming the obstructions that genealogical matter would so naturally present, might occur to the mind, the more impressive is their evidence felt to be when it spontaneously presents itself. Thus, *e.g.*, it is presumable that the genealogies and other tables affecting Israel in the older records were, *upon the whole*, not less full than those of Judah, even if we readily grant that there were well-understood reasons in Providence from the earliest for the more special charge of the latter. Yet these genealogies give *very marked* preponderance to the line of Judah. The tribes of Dan and Zebulon are passed over, and scanty indeed is the reference to Israel, in respect of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, at a most critical time (ch. v. 26). Compare, however, the significant allusion to Judah in the same chapter (ver. 2; as also ch. xxviii. 4). The prominence afterwards given throughout the historical portion to Judah is, in *fact*,

foreshadowed plainly enough in the early tabular chapters. Again, it is impossible not to notice that, so surely as the indications of the moral and spiritual objects of the work remount and insist on finding their place in the midst of old lists and tables of genealogies, so surely the genealogical disposition (as it has been conveniently termed) of the compiler or writer is constantly betraying itself, whenever there is a possible opening for it throughout the book. The celebrated forty or more parallel sections, again, tabulated by Keil and Davidson, etc., run with wonderful evenness of occurrence alongside the whole stretch of the history. Several phrases, which are of the rarest occurrence elsewhere, and in some cases are not to be found out of Chronicles, are in this book found indifferently in genealogy or in history, binding part with part. The same may be said of not a few grammatical forms, and which will be found noted where they occur. Much stress also has been justly laid on certain more general characteristics of the writer, such as his very brief touch of certain kinds of matter, his very shortened treatment of others, and, on the other hand, the uniform practice he observes from beginning to end, of making reference, with some variety and readiness to amplify, to the punishment visited on kings and people for their sins and disobedience. The "Levitical" spirit and the "priestly" spirit and the "theocratic" spirit, which have been so often remarked upon and not rarely so perversely, all find their explanation here; and meantime all help to attest the unanimity of one, not of many minds. The sum total of indications of one writer and one object and one unbroken work seems amply sufficient to balance a very few hitches, brief gaps, occasional abruptness, and some apparent inconsistencies, a large proportion of which probably await for their extinction nothing but the first competent collation of Hebrew texts. The Hebrew student will not read far, without discovering the corruptions and imperfections of our present Hebrew text. But if he read to the end, and microscopically examine every difficulty such as might probably be referable to the text, greatly as his interest and curiosity will be intensified, he will not find in them all the kind of indications that would lead him to suspect his author or his author's work. He probably may find many of a very opposite turn and character. The state of the Hebrew text in Chronicles, so far as regards passages in which *numbers* occur, is in very strict harmony with all similar kind of matter in any other part of the Old Testament. Uncertainty and inconsistency characterize all this kind of matter, and for reasons well enough known and existing in the language itself.

§ 9. LITERATURE OF CHRONICLES.

It can scarcely be said that the literature of Chronicles is very scanty in quantity, but it can yet less be said to be rich in quality, or very satisfactory so far as it goes. There are not wanting, however, indications of an improved and fairer style of criticism of the work, which will inevitably

lead to some surer conclusions upon the greater questions involved in it; while help against the great and frequent corruption of the text may be confidently expected from that invaluable collation of the Massorah, about to be given to Hebrew scholarship by the indefatigable labours of Dr. Ginsburg. For the freer criticism and bolder challenging of questions suggested by Chronicles, we are, of course, indebted mainly and in the first instance to the theological expositors of Germany. Their views, so far as they may have anything characteristic about them, generally declare themselves in a pronounced manner, as of one or the other of two opposing schools. These schools are separated, not more by the evident and almost unscrupulous aim of the one to decry the authenticity of the work which the other consistently supports, than by an habitual disparaging treatment of its contents. The following list gives the more important critical treatises and commentaries:—

Bertheau: ‘Die Bücher der Chronik. Erklärt.’ 1st edit., Leipsic, 1854; 2nd edit., 1860. A translation of this work in its first edition is found in Clark’s Foreign Theological Library. This is the work of a fair and careful critic.

Keil: ‘Apologet. Versuch. über die Bücher der Chronik.’ 1st edit., Berlin, 1833. Of a much later work (Leipsic, 1870) there is likewise an English translation in Clark’s Library.

Zöckler: ‘Comment. über Chronik,’ in Lange’s large ‘Bibelwerk.’ Of the whole of this ‘Bibelwerk’ there is an English translation in several imp. 8vo vols.

Movers: ‘Krit. Untersuch. über die Biblische Chronik.’ 1st edit., Bonn, 1834. This work was provoked by the attacks of De Wette and Gramberg.

Gramberg: ‘Die Chronik. nach i. Geschicht. Charak. über i. Glaubwürd.’ 1823.

Graf: ‘Die Geschichtliche Bücher der Alt. Test.’ Leipsic, 1866.

Zunz: ‘Gottesdienst. Vorträge. d. Juden.’

Ewald: ‘Geschichte. d. Volks-Israel.’ An admirable translation of this by Russel Martineau is published.

Dr. S. Davidson’s latest editions of ‘Old Testament Introductions.’

There are suggestions, discussions, and short articles of more or less original value, in various ‘Einleitungen in Alt. Test.’ such as those of Hävernick, De Wette, Eichhorn, Dahler, Keil, Schrader, Bleek, and in the article ‘Chronik,’ by *Dillman*, in Herzog’s ‘Encyclopædia.’

In the well-known English ‘Bible Dictionaries’ of *Kitto* (Alexander’s edition), *Dr. W. Smith*, and *Fairbairn*, there are articles of interest, under ‘Chronicles,’ more of the nature of summaries than marked by original research or suggestion; as also in the eighth edition of the ‘Encyclopædia Britannica,’ by *R. W——n*; superseded in the ninth edition by one of much more comprehensive scope, written by Professor *W. Robertson Smith*.

§ 10. ARRANGEMENT OF THE WORK (1 CHRONICLES) IN PARTS AND SECTIONS.

The First Book of Chronicles falls into two parts. Part I. consists of a series of genealogies (accompanied by some few geographical and ethnical touches), beginning from Adam and extending to Israel (ch. i.); thence in *the line of Israel*, on to David and the Captivity; and furthermore, as regards the family of David, to the building of the second temple, and as regards the family of Aaron, to Jozadak and his captivity under Nebuchadnezzar (ch. ii.—ix.). Part II. is occupied with the history of David (ch. x.—xxix.).

PART I. CH. I.—IX. 17 SECTIONS.

The genealogy of the human race from Adam to Noah and his three sons. Ch. i. 1—4.

Descendants direct and collateral of these three sons, including those of Esau and Seir, and the kings and dukes of Edom. Ch. i. 5—54.

The descendants of the tribe of Judah. Ch. ii.—iv. 23.

”	”	”	Simeon. Ch. iv. 24—43.
”	”	”	Reuben. Ch. v. 1—10.
”	”	”	Gad. Ch. v. 11—17.
”	”	”	Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh. Ch. v. 18—26.
”	”	”	Levi. Ch. vi.
”	”	”	Issachar. Ch. vii. 1—5.
”	”	”	Benjamin. Ch. vii. 6—12.
”	”	”	Napthali. Ch. vii. 13.
”	”	”	Manasseh. Ch. vii. 14—19.
”	”	”	Ephraim. Ch. vii. 20—29.
”	”	”	Asher. Ch. vii. 30—40.
”	”	”	Benjamin (continued). Ch. viii.

The dwellers in Jerusalem. Ch. ix. 2—34.

Repetition (ch. viii. 29—40) of the pedigree and house of Saul. Ch. ix. 35—44.

PART II. CH. X.—XXIX. 27 SECTIONS.

The utter overthrow of Saul. Ch. x.

The reign of David over all the kingdom. Ch. xi. 1—9.

The list of his mighty men. Ch. xi. 10—47.

The list of the adherents of David in Saul's time. Ch. xii. 1—22.

The list of those who supported him on his enthronement. Ch. xii. 23—40.

The removal of the ark, and its shelter in the house of Obed-edom. Ch. xiii.

The palace of David, his wives, and the beginning of his victories. Ch. xiv.

The successful removal of the ark, and services and feast in connection therewith. Ch. xv., xvi.

The unfolding of David's purpose to build a house for the Lord. Ch. xvii.

David's wars with Moabites, Philistines, and Syrians; and his chief officers. Ch. xviii.

David's victories over Ammon and Aram. Ch. xix.

David's wars with Rabbah and the Philistine giants. Ch. xx.

The fatal numbering of the people, the propitiation, and the establishing of the altar on Mount Moriah. Ch. xxi.

David's preparations for the temple, and charges to Solomon and the princes. Ch. xxii.

The Levites, their classes, families, and duties. Ch. xxiii.

The twenty-four classes of priests and Levites. Ch. xxiv.

The chorister families, and the choir-leaders. Ch. xxv.

The porters and their duties. Ch. xxvi. 1—28.

The officers and judges. Ch. xxvi. 29—32.

The months' courses of army captains. Ch. xxvii. 1—15.

The princes of the tribes. Ch. xxvii. 16—24.

The stewards of the treasures. Ch. xxvii. 25—31.

The king's special helpers and counsellors. Ch. xxvii. 32—34.

David's address to Solomon in the presence of the great convocation of the princes. Ch. xxviii. 1—10.

The building plans of the temple. Ch. xxviii. 11—21.

The gifts of David and the princes, the thanksgiving of David, and breaking up of the solemn assembly. Ch. xxix. 1—25.

The close of the history of David's reign. Ch. xxix. 26—30.

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I

Vers. 1—4.—A. LIST OF GENERATIONS FROM ADAM TO NOAH. These verses contain a line of genealogical descents, ten in number, from Adam to Noah, adding mention of the three sons of the latter. The stride from Adam to Seth, and the genealogy's entire obliviousness of Cain and Abel, are full of suggestion. All of these thirteen names in the Hebrew and in the Septuagint Version, though not those in the Authorized Version, are fac-similes of those which occur in Gen. v. They are not accompanied, however, here, as they are there, by any chronological attempt. Probably the main reason of this is that any references of the kind were quite beside the objects which the compiler of this work had in view. It is, however, possible that other reasons for this chronological silence may have existed. The uncertainties attaching to the chronology found in Genesis, as regards this table, may have been suspected or evident—uncertainties which afterwards proclaim themselves so loudly in the differences observable between the Hebrew, Samaritan, and Septuagint versions. Thus the Hebrew text exhibits the total aggregate of years from Adam to the birth of Noah, as amounting to one thousand and fifty-six; the Samaritan version to seven hundred and seven only; and the Septuagint to as many as sixteen hundred and sixty-two; nevertheless, all three agree in adding five hundred years onward to the birth of Shem, and another hundred years to the coming of the Flood. It must be remarked of this first genealogical table, whether occurring here or in Genesis, that, notwithstanding its finished appearance, notwithstanding the impression it undoubtedly first makes on the reader, that it purports to

give all the intervening generations from the first to Shem, it may not be so; nor be intended to convey that impression. It is held by some that names are omitted, and with them of course the years which belonged to them. There can be no doubt that this theory would go far to remove several great difficulties, and that some analogies might be invoked in support of it, from the important genealogies of the New Testament. The altogether abrupt opening of this book—a succession of proper names without any verb or predication—cannot be considered as even partially compensated by the first sentence of ch. ix., “So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.” This verse applies directly to the genealogies of Israel and the tribes, beginning ch. ii. 1, while under any circumstances, we must look on the first portion of this book as a series of tables, here and there slightly annotated, and suddenly suspended before the eyes.

Vers. 5—7.—B. LIST OF SONS AND GRANDSONS OF JAPETH. After the mention of Noah's three sons, in the order of their age (though some on slender ground think Ham the youngest), this order, as in Gen. x. 2, is reversed; and the compiler, beginning with Japheth, the youngest, apparently with the view of disposing of what his purpose may not so particularly require, gives the names of seven sons and seven grandsons, viz. three through Gomer, the eldest son, and four through Javan, the fourth son. These fourteen names are identical in the Authorized Version with the list of Gen. x. 2—4. The Septuagint, though not identical in the spelling of the four names Madai, Tiras, Tarshish, and Kittim, shows no material differences in the two places. In the He-

Vers. 8-16.—C. LIST OF THE SONS, GRANDSONS, AND GREAT-GRANDSONS OF HAM. This list consists of four sons of Ham, of six grandsons, including Nimrod, through Cush, the eldest son of Ham; of seven grandsons through Mizraim, the second son of Ham; of eleven grandsons through Canaan, the fourth son of Ham; of two great-grandsons through Raamah, Cush's fourth son;—thirty descendants in all. No issue is given of Put, the third son of Ham. The parallel list is found in Gen. x. 6-20. The names agree in the Authorized Version, with minute differences, e.g. Put here for Phut there, and so the Philistines for Philitine, Caphthorim for Caphtorim, Girgashite for Girgasite. They are similarly in agreement in the Hebrew text of the two places, with minute differences, e.g. אֶפְרַיִם here for אֶפְרַיִם there; for עֲמָלֵךְ here for עֲמָלֵךְ there; for קָרְבָּן here for קָרְבָּן there. However, in Genesis the following statements are added to Nimrod's name:—"He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land

of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah ; the same is a great city." And again, at the close of the enumeration of sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons, follow the statements, " And afterwards were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad. And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza ; as thou goest, unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha. These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations."

Ver. 10.—The Septuagint supplies the word *κυρνύδες* after *γίας*. Also after this description of Nimrod, it proceeds to the enumeration of the posterity of Shem, omitting all mention of Ham's grandsons through Mizraim and Cainan. Up to that point the names in this book and Genesis are in agreement in the Septuagint Version. It is evident that some of the names in this portion of the genealogy are not strictly those of the individual, but of the tribe or nation which came to be, as, for instance, Mizraim, Ludim, the Jebusite, the Amorite, and so on.

Ver. 16.—This verse furnishes us with one illustration of the assertion made above, that the clues to the ethnological and ethnographical statements of these most ancient records are not necessarily all hopelessly lost. In the name Zemarite, it is suggested by Michaelis, that we have allusion to the place *Sumra*, on the west coast of Syria, this *Sumra* being the *Sinuysa* of Pliny ('Hist. Nat.' v. 20), and of the Spanish geographer of the first century, Pomponius Mela (i. 12). But the place *Zimira*, in company with *Arpad*, is found in the Assyrian inscriptions of Sargon, b.c. 720, leaving little cause to hesitate in accepting the identification of Michaelis (Conder's 'Hand-book to the Bible,' p. 233). Certainty, however, cannot be felt on the subject.

Vers. 17-27.—D. THE LIST OF SHEM's DESCENDANTS TO ABRAM. This list is broken in two; it pauses a moment exactly half-way to Abram, at the name Peleg, to mention Peleg's brother Joktan and Joktan's thirteen sons. Then, repeating the first five names of lineal descent, and picking up the thread at Peleg, the list gives the remaining five to Abram. In the first half of this list, we have apparently the names of nine sons of Shem, but, as Genesis explains, really the names of five sons, and through Aram, the last of them, the names of four grandsons. Another grandson, through Arphaxad the third son, follows, and through this grandson two consecutive lineal descents bring us, in the name Peleg.

half-way to Abram. It is here the lineal table pauses to give Joktan and his thirteen sons. The names then in this portion of the list are twenty-six in number. In the Authorized Version they correspond with those in Genesis, except that Meschech (משׁך) here is called Mash (מַשָׁךְ) there; Shelah here is spelled Salah there; and Ebal (אֶבָּל) here is written Obal (אֶבָּל) there. The difference between the Hebrew texts justifies the first and last of these variations in the Authorized Version, but in all other respects those texts are in entire accord with one another, for this paragraph. The Septuagint gives very little of this portion of the list. It corresponds, whether with the Hebrew or the Authorized Version, only as far as to the name Arphaxad, after which it carries down the line at once to Abram by the remaining eight names as given in our twenty-fourth to twenty-seventh verses. Nor is it in agreement with its own version in Genesis, which has points of important variation with the Hebrew text also. It is then at this break of the list that, after the names of Joktan's sons, we have in Genesis these words, "And their dwelling was from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sephar a mount of the east. These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations. These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations; and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the Flood." Upon this follows the account of Babel, in nine long verses, and then a chronological summary is furnished in lineal descent *only* from Shem to Abram. It is with the names in this chronological summary that those in this second part of our list (vers. 24—27) are found to agree. But any attempt at reproduction of the chronology found in Genesis is again absent here. At this point a significant stage of these genealogies is reached. The ever-broadening stream of population now narrows again. Two thousand years have flown by, then Abraham appears on the stream and tide of human life. Of that long period the life of Adam himself spanned nearly the half. So far we learn without partiality of all his descendants in common. But henceforth, the real, the distinct purpose of the genealogy becomes apparent, in that the line of the descendants of Abraham, and that by one family, alone is maintained, and proves to be a purpose leading by one long straight line to Christ himself. With Abraham "the covenant of innocency," long forfeited in Adam, is superseded by the everlasting "covenant of grace," and we lose sight in some measure of Adam, the "common father of our flesh," to think of a happier

parentage found in Abraham, the "common father of the faithful."

Vers. 28—37.—E. LIST OF THE SONS, GRANDSONS, AND OTHER DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM. In the first of these verses the new form of the name of Abraham is at once used in place of the old form. And the names of two of his sons are given, Isaac the son by Sarah, and Ishmael the son by Hagar, his Egyptian bondwoman. That these stand in the inverse order of their birth and age requires no explanation. The distinct and separate mention of these two sons, apart from all the others, is of course in harmony with Gen. xxi. 12, 13, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed." Although stated in the first place in the order of importance, and Isaac takes precedence of Ishmael, the name of this latter and of his posterity are treated of first. To note each clear instance of this kind will guard us against inferring, in cases *not* clear, anything positive, one way or the other, respecting seniority merely from order. The order either of age or of historic importance may be given in the first instance, to be immediately reversed in favour of the order which shall enable the writer to clear out of his way the less important.

Vers. 29—31 contain the list of Ishmael's sons, twelve in number. The names in the Authorized Version and in the Hebrew text are identical respectively with those in Gen. xxv. 13—15, except that for Hadar there we read Hadad here. In the Septuagint we have Idouma, Choudan, Iettar here, for Douma, Choddan, and Ietur there. At the close of this list in Genesis we have joined on to "these are the sons of Ishmael," the clauses, "and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations. And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people. And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren."

Vers. 32, 33, contain the list of Abraham's sons by Keturah, here called one of his concubines; but in Genesis, "a wife," and apparently not taken by Abraham till after Sarah's death (Gen. xxv. 1—4). The sons are six; the grandsons, two by the son placed second in order, and five by the son placed fourth in order; in all thirteen names. But the passage in Genesis gives also three great-grandsons, through the second grandson. All the thirteen are in the Authorized Version identical in the two

places and in the Hebrew text; but in the Septuagint slight differences occur, as Zembram, Iezan, Madam, Sobak, Soe, Daidan, Sabai, Opher, Abida, and Eldada here, for Zombran, Iezan, Madal, Iesbok, Soie, Dedan, Saba, Aphicir, Abeida, and Eldaga there. It is carefully stated in Gen. xv. 5, 6, after the enumeration of Keturah's children, and in spite of her having been called "wife" in the first verse, that "Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country."

Vers. 34—37 lead us on to the descendants of Isaac, the more important branch of Abraham's family. It breaks again at once into two, Esau, the less important, treated of first; and Israel, reserved till we enter on ch. ii. Of *Esau*, the names of five sons are given; and of seven grandsons by the first in order, and four grandsons by the second in order of these sons. In Gen. xxxvi. 1—5 we have the names of the five sons of Esau, which correspond in the Authorized Version and in the Hebrew text exactly with those of this list. We have there in addition the names of their mothers respectively, who were "daughters of Canaan," Adah of the Hittites, mother of the first; Bashamath of the Ishmaelites, mother of the second (and by these two lines came the seven and four grandsons); and Aholibamah of the Hivites, mother of the remaining three sons. The names correspond also in the Septuagint in the two places, with the minute differences of Eliphaz and Ieoul here, for *Eliphas* and *Ieous* there. Then follow the names of seven grandsons of Esau though his son Eliphaz, of whom the first five are found and in agreement (Gen. xxxvi. 11), with the exception of Zephi here for Zepho there, both in the Authorized Version and in the Hebrew text. But the sixth name here, Timna, is explained in Genesis as the name of a concubine of Eliphaz, by whom he had the son Amalek, who appears here as the seventh son. There can be no doubt that we come here upon a transcriber's error, and it would be easily amended if we read "and by Timna, Amalek," *vice* "and Timna and Amalek." If this be the correct account of the matter, the grandsons of Esau of course count one fewer here. These two names also tally in the Authorized Version and in the Hebrew text in the two places; while for all seven names the agreement in the Septuagint is exact, except that we read Goôtham here for Gothom there. There remain, in ver. 37, four grandsons to Esau, by Reuel. Their names agree with Genesis in the Authorized Version, in the Hebrew

text, and in the Septuagint, except that this last reads Nacher here for Nachoth there.

Vers. 38—42.—F. LIST OF DESCENDANTS OF SEIR. These verses contain the names of seven sons of Seir and one daughter, and of grandsons through every one of the seven sons, viz. two through Lotan the first, five through Shobal the second, two through Zibeon the third, one through Anah the fourth, four through Dishon the fifth, three through Ezar the sixth, and two through Dishan the seventh,—twenty-six names in all, or, including the one daughter, who is introduced as Lotan's sister, twenty-seven. The first question which arises is, who Seir was, now first mentioned here. He is called in Gen. xxxvi. 20 "Seir the Horite," and the only previous mention of the name Seir in that chapter is in ver. 8, "Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom;" while we read in Gen. xiv. 6, "The Horites in mount Seir;" in Gen. xxxii. 3, "To the land of Seir, the country of Edom." For anything we know of the person Seir, then, we are confined to these two notices—that in Gen. xxxvi. 20 and the one in our text. The name signifies "rough;" and whether Seir, the person, took the name from Seir, the place (a mountain district, reaching from the Dead Sea to the Elanitic Gulf), or *vice versa*, it would seem plain that the proper name belonged to the head of the tribe, which had become located there, and was, of course, not in the line of Abraham. This tribe, called Horites—Hori being the name of Seir's eldest grandson—or *Troglodytes*, acquired their name from hollowing out dwellings in the rocks, as at Petra. They were visited evidently by Esau: he married at least one of his wives from them; and his descendants, the Edomites, in due time dispossessed and superseded them (Deut. ii. 12). No doubt some were left behind, and contentedly submitted to the Edomites and became mingled with them. These considerations put together account for the introduction here of the names of Seir and his twenty-seven descendants, while the particulars of their genealogy, so far as here given, would lie easily to hand. The sons of Seir are called in Genesis also "dukes" (דָּקָר), a word answered to by the later "sheikhs;" and they are called "dukes of the Horites," or "the dukes of Hori, among their dukes in the land of Seir." The twenty-six or twenty-seven names under notice agree in the Authorized Version entirely with those in Gen. xxxvi. 20—27, except that for Homam, Alian, Shephi, Amram, and Jakan here, we have Hemam, Alvan, Shepho, Hemand, and Akan there. Also in the Hebrew the texts

agree in the two places as regards these names, with the same exceptions. But in the Septuagint the names differ much more in the two places. Thus for Ὀσάρ, Ασάρ (or Αισάν), Ἀλών, Ταιθὴλ, Σωρί, Ὄνάς, Αθί, Σωράν, Δαισών, Ἐμερόν, Ἀσεβάν, Ιεθρόν, and Ακάν here, we have Ἀσάρ, Ρισδύν, Γαλάμη, Γαιθὴλ, Σωφάρ, Ὄμαρ, Ἀτή, Ἀνδ, Δηράν, Αιαδά, Ἀσεβάν, Ιεθρόν, and Ιουκάν there. When the name of Anah is reached in Genesis, it is added, "This was that Anah that found the mules [סְבִּירָתָן], more probably 'hot springs,' as the singular of which Anah is supposed to have been called *Beers*] in the wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon, his father." And again, when Dishon is mentioned as the son of Anah, there is added, "And Aholibamah the daughter of Anah." Note is made of her name, no doubt, for the same kind of reason as Timna is mentioned above. Aholibamah (i.e. "Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite," Gen. xxvi. 34) enjoys notice inasmuch as she became the wife of Esau; and Timna, as she became the concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz, and thereby the mother of Amalek.

Ver. 42—50.—G. LIST OF KINGS OF EDOM. These verses contain a list of kings who reigned in Edom, during a period expressly notified as anterior to the institution of kings in Israel. Some further point of practical use than has been yet ascertained may lie in the preservation of these snatches of Edom's history. Something surely hangs on the emphatic but otherwise gratuitous statement, that kings were unknown in Israel when this line reigned in Edom. It may turn out to cover the fulfilment of some obscure point of prophecy, or to subserve some important chronological purpose; but wedged in as it is, it cannot be permitted to count for nothing. That it stands in identical words in Gen. xxxvi. 31 increases not a little the attention to be paid to it. It has hence been asserted far too dogmatically, as by Spinoza, that the Book of Genesis was no work of Moses; or again, that the passage, in the course of some transcription of manuscripts, had found its way from Chronicles, through a marginal note, at last into the text of Genesis (see Kennicott). But these positions are only forced by the assumption that kings must have reigned in Israel before the sentence could have been written, which is an unnecessary assumption. Kings had been promised to Jacob (Gen. xxxv. 11), as among his posterity, and had been prophesied of by Moses (Deut. xxviii. 36). It may have been that Edom, secure in her kings for generations, had been wont to make her boast of them, in comparison of and in presence of her neighbours, and the

remark may have *thence* originated. Lastly, it has been correctly pointed out that the structure of the sentence in the original does not at all necessitate the suggestion (of which in the English Version there is confessedly the *appearance*), that kings had already been in Israel. At the same time, too great stress must not be laid upon this, for the slight alteration of translation that would suit the time for Genesis, would throw it out again for our text here, and yet the words of the original are identical. These kings are eight in number; the patrilineage or the land of each is given. It is to be noticed that the line of royalty is not hereditary, and that several dukes, or heads of tribes, or princes of districts, rule under the king. The names, whether of persons or places, agree in the Authorized Version as they occur here and in Gen. xxxvi. 31—39, except that Saul is here spelt Shanl, and that we have here Hadad and Pai for Hadar and Pau there. These two differences are occasioned by the Hebrew text, and are the only differences between the two Hebrew texts, except that שָׁן here is given שָׁן there, and that the incorrect spelling here of פָּעַי, is found right (פָּעַי) in Genesis. The superfluous statement, Hadad died also, which begins our fifty-first verse, is not found in Genesis. In the Septuagint the variations between the two places are greater, as well as those from the Hebrew text in either place. Thus we have Asōm, Gethaim, Sebila, Roboth, Ballenor, Achōbor, Adad, here, for Asōm, Gethaim, Samada, Rooboth, Ballenor, Achōbor, Arad, there. There is also an entire omission here of the name of the wife of the last king, with those of her mother and grandmother, all of which are given in the passage of Genesis, as found in the Hebrew text.

Ver. 44.—It is not impossible that this Jobab is one with Job. The allusions in Gen. xxxvi. 11 to "Eliphaz the Temanite" have directed attention to this; and it has been favoured by the Septuagint and the Fathers.

Ver. 48.—Rehoboth by the river; i.e. the Euphrates, to distinguish it probably from "the city Behoboth" of Gen. x. 11.

Ver. 51—54.—H. LIST OF ELEVEN DUKES OF EDOM. These, the remaining verses of ch. i., appear to give a list of eleven dukes of Edom, emphasized apparently as "the dukes of Edom," as though there were none before or after them. But see Gen. xxxvi. 15, 41, 43, the study of which can scarcely leave a doubt on the mind that this list is not one of persons but of places; e.g. "the duke" of the city, or region of "Timnah," and so on. The places were dukedoms. The names of these verses, in

both Authorized Version and Hebrew text, are an exact counterpart of those found in Gen. xxxvi. 40-43, except that *Aliyah* here (so *Alian*, ver. 40) stands for *Alvah* in Genesis. In the Septuagint we have *Golada*, *Elibamas*, and *Babsar* here, for *Gola*, *Olibemas*, and *Mazar* there. Thus this first chapter contains those genealogical tables which concern the patriarchs from Adam up to Israel, spanning a stretch of some two thousand three hundred years, and embracing also tables of Edom and certain of the descendants of Edom up to the period of kings. The chapter contains not a single instance of a remark that could be described as of a moral, religious, or didactic kind. Yet not a little is to be learnt sometimes, not a little suggested, from omission and solemn silence as well as from speech; no more notable instance of which could perhaps be given, when we take into account time, place, and circumstances, than that already

alluded to in the omissions involved in the following of the name of Seth upon that of Adam. The genealogies of this chapter, with their parallels in Genesis, are notable also for standing unique in all the world's writing, and far over all the world's mythology, for retracing the pedigree of the wide family of men, and especially of the now scattered family of the Jew, to its original. From the time of the close of our Chronicle genealogies, supplemented by the earliest of the New Testament, no similarly comprehensive but useful, ambitious but deliberately designed and successfully executed enterprise has been attempted. And as Matthew Henry has well said, since Christ came, the Jews have lost all their genealogies, even the most sacred of them, "the building is reared, the scaffold is removed; the Seed is come, the line that led to him is broken off."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

On the whole book—Chronicles. It has pleased God that a large part of Old Testament Scripture should take the form of history. The sacred books of the Hebrews consist largely of a record of the national life. Here we read of the birth and growth of the chosen people, their prosperity, their conquests, their defeats and captivities, their lawgivers, priests, prophets, kings, and patriots. This Book of Chronicles contains the genealogies of Hebrew tribes and families, and the annals of the nation during the long and glorious reign of David. There must be reasons why the volume which contains the revelation of the Divine character and will should, in so many parts, assume the historical form.

I. There is a **GENERAL RELIGIOUS PURPOSE** answered by history. Man is social, and is appointed by Providence to live in families, tribes, and nations. Religion not only summons the individual to live a life of allegiance and submission to the unseen power of righteousness and grace, but requires men in their political relations to abide beneath the guiding eye of the Eternal. 1. Historical records promote national life. 2. They encourage a sense of national unity and responsibility. "Not only," says a great writer, "does the nobleness of a nation depend on the presence of this national consciousness, but also the nobleness of each individual citizen." The same writer adduces the Jews as an illustration of this principle. 3. They furnish us with practical political lessons. Bossuet has admirably shown of what service history must needs be to princes and rulers. 4. They represent good and evil principles in living instances. 5. To the devout mind they are full of indications of the presence and the energy of God, the moral Ruler and Lord of all.

II. There is a **SPECIAL RELIGIOUS USE** in Jewish history. 1. It is the history of a very remarkable and favoured—we should say chosen—people. 2. It records direct interpositions of the hand of God. In the obligation to obedience and service, in the chastisement of lawlessness and rebellion, the Christian can trace a Divine power, whatever race or nation he reviews in the pages of history or contemplates with an observant eye. The peculiarity of the Israelitish chronicles lies here—the Divine power is acknowledged from page to page. 3. The history of the Jews is an epitome of the history of mankind. Within that little territory of Palestine there lived a microcosm of humanity. The parallel is ever presenting itself to our vision. 4. The record of Israel is the story of the preparation for the advent of Christianity. The Old Testament points on to the New. This Book of Chronicles, in its biography of David, leads the mind on to him who was David's Son and David's Lord.

APPLICATION. 1. This book should be read with interest as presenting an especially

Levitical view of Hebrew history. 2. The reader should be on the watch for gleams of light amidst the sombre catalogues of Israelitish names. (3) Sympathy should be elicited by the presentation of the Divine side of both biography and history.—T.

On the first nine chapters—Genealogies. Most readers of the Scriptures shrink from perusing the lengthy genealogical tables which constitute so large a part of the Books of Numbers and of Chronicles. It is difficult to feel any interest in persons of whom we know nothing but the name. The lists of Hebrew names constitute dry and unattractive reading. Yet, as every man amongst ourselves who has a distinguished pedigree takes pleasure in tracing his own descent by means of "the family tree" which he has in his possession, so it is reasonable to suppose that the Jews regarded their recorded genealogies with pleasure and pride. There are, however, reasons why we also should contemplate these family records with interest.

I. There are **GENERAL REASONS** why genealogies should be recorded and preserved. 1. Family life is ordained by God. Revelation teaches us that the family is a Divine institution, and society can only prosper and retain stability when fixed upon this basis. 2. Family feeling is consequently natural and Divine. The relationships of the household are bound up with deep, tender, and beneficial sentiments. 3. Family recollections and records are of human interest and moral advantage. When the father tells the story of his boyhood to his son, the grandfather to his grandson, there is a natural interest felt, and a wholesome feeling of family life and community developed. 4. In many instances family history is an important part of national history. The story of the reigning family in a monarchical country, and of families distinguished for hereditary ability and patriotism in all countries, can scarcely be omitted from the chronicles of a nation. 5. The federal family feeling is contributive to the religious life. "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts."

II. There are **SPECIAL REASONS** why the genealogies of the Jews should be preserved. The fact that they have been thought worthy of so prominent a place in the canonical Scriptures is indicative of their importance to the national and religious life of the Hebrew people. 1. In some instances these genealogies evince the faithfulness of God in the fulfilment of prophecy. This is especially the case with regard to the character and functions of the several tribes of Israel. 2. In some instances these tables indicate the functions of families in the nation and in the service of the sanctuary. Thus the tribe of Judah is pointed out as the monarchical, the tribe of Levi as the ministerial tribe, and the family of Aaron as the priestly family. 3. One especial purpose of Hebrew genealogy was to provide that the descent of the Messiah should be duly traced, and that the predictions of Scripture should be thus obviously fulfilled. The genealogies of the Evangelists should be read in connection with those of the books of the Old Testament. The Son of David, the descendant of Abraham, is thus shown to be the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind.—T.

Ver. 10.—A mighty one. In the early history of the world and in the early history of most nations there arise, out of the dimness, great gigantic figures. We know little of such; but they impress the imagination, and their names suggest great qualities and memorable deeds. Such a figure is Nimrod, of whom we read that "he began to be mighty upon the earth."

I. Observe an instance of the **NATURAL INEQUALITY OF MAN WITH MAN**. Many are forgotten; one is remembered; and he who is remembered is, in some respects, superior to his fellows. This inequality is divinely ordered, and, on the whole, must be admitted to contribute to the welfare of society. The respects in which men are great and distinguished are very various. Some are admired for their bodily powers, their daring; others for their wisdom; others, again, for their sanctity.

II. Observe **MEN'S NATURAL TENDENCY TO DO HOMAGE TO GREATNESS**. This often takes the form of "hero-worship," to use the expression of one of our most influential thinkers and writers. The disposition to hero-worship is neither an unmixed good nor an unmixed evil.

III. Consider **THE CONSEQUENT RESPONSIBILITY OF POWER AND GREATNESS**. When used for an evil end, power is indeed a curse. The selfish, the ambitious, the cruel,

are a scourge to humanity. On the other hand, a wide range of influence is the means of the usefulness of those who are alike good and great. The more the talents, the more serious the reckoning at last with the Lord and Judge. History largely consists of the records of the achievements of the mighty. What an account must some such have to render at the last!

APPLICATION. 1. See that the greatness you admire be true greatness, moral grandeur, spiritual dignity. 2. Whether your endowments be lavish or slender, seek to use aright what a wise Providence has entrusted to your care.—T.

On the genealogical tables of the first six chapters of the First Book of Chronicles. It is worth while to read these long lists of names. It is like standing on a river-bank and watching the flow of time. Solemn thoughts of transiency of life, of fame, of importance, are suggested by them. Solemn thoughts of responsibility are started by them, and appeals to act worthily of the past rise from them. They deepen our respect for our grand old world, the nurse of heroes and of saints—

“Where half the soil has trod the rest
In poets, heroes, martyrs, sages.”

They reconcile us, to some extent, to inevitable evils in the present, showing that wars and conflicts have been the order of the day from the beginning. Observe more particularly—

I. How broadly the writer of this book lays **THE BASIS OF HUMAN BROTHERHOOD**. He is intensely devoted to the Jewish priesthood—almost certainly one of them. Some, therefore, would expect only narrowness from him. Priest, presbyter, or pastor are all supposed to have more contracted views than neighbours. But he commences his genealogies, not with Moses, nor Jacob, nor Abraham, but with Adam; recognizing at the outset that mankind is of one blood, one essential nature, one need, one capacity. *This is one of the grand differences between the Bible religion and all other ancient religions.* It recognized a common brotherhood of mankind beneath the common fatherhood of God. Let us learn this lesson, and go back a little further than the Commonwealth or the Conquest, and remember the English race is not made of different clay from the rest of mankind. All had the same origin, and all, therefore, are capable of the same elevation.

II. Observe, secondly, **IT BECOMES US TO RECOGNIZE OUR INDEBTEDNESS TO THE PAST**. No Jew could read these records without feeling it. If possessing fertile land, they owed it to others—to the Simeonites, five hundred, who occupied Mount Seir (ch. iv. 39—43); to the men of Reuben, extirpating Arab tribes and dwelling in their place for centuries; to Caleb, for possessing Hebron; to Machir and to Jair, and to many such. If enjoying the arts of life, they should remember how much of these were inherited. They would recall with advantage “Joab, the father of the valley of craftsmen” (ch. iv. 14); those who “wrought fine linen of the house of Ashbea” (ver. 21); and “the potters” and “those that dwelt among plants and hedges” (ver. 23). If they rejoice in their exquisite poetry, and their music probably matching it in worth, they should remember David and Heman (ch. vi. 33), Asaph (ver. 39), and Merari (ver. 44). It is well to remember the debt we owe to the past. Science did not begin in the nineteenth century, nor good laws, nor philanthropy, nor even statesmanship. We stand on the shoulders of the past. Some are too confident and presumptuous, as if what we possess had been achieved and not inherited. See that we do something for posterity, and transmit in finer volume the advantages we have enjoyed.

III. Observe **THE LONG BLESSING THAT FOLLOWS THE GODLY**. The priestly line of Aaron is traced through a thousand years of eminence down to the time of the Captivity, and then it is still strong. The royal line of David is traced down to the Captivity, the crown resting on some member of his family through seventeen generations, and traced subsequently in the eminence of Zerubbabel, who is one of the leaders of the return. Blessing of long lines of progeny, inheriting parents' success, are seen in many other cases, e.g. Caleb's. A grandson of the prophet Samuel (Heman) inherits his poetic fire. Evil extends its traces and its curse to the third or fourth generation of those that hate God; good carries its blessing to “thousands of generations” of those

that love him. Do right and do good, and none can limit your power of blessing your fellow-men. Yet observe, lastly—

IV. THE PROMISE OF THE START IS SOMETIMES BROKEN, AND THE UNPROMISING BEGINNING TURNS OUT WELL. Some of Aaron's sons (Nadab and Abihu) have an awful fate; some of Judah's an unhappy character. But sometimes a family, beginning badly, improves; for example, here is Jwlah's, who in the course of a few generations had in it Er, Onan, and Achan ("the troubler of Israel"); yet it runs itself clear, and gets better, purer, and stronger as it goes on. Therefore despair of none, nor of yourself. Heart within and God overhead, whatever you have been, you may become a blessing to great multitudes.—G.

Ver. 1, etc.—*The mission of Scripture genealogies.* Since "all Scripture is . . . profitable," etc. (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17), we may inquire what is the purpose of the many genealogical records that are preserved for us, and how they stand related to the higher spiritual objects of the Divine revelation. It appears that genealogies have always possessed a peculiar attraction for Orientals; and still nothing so quickly seizes their attention, or pleases them so much, as a summary or review of their histories. The genealogies of Scripture, therefore, help to give naturalness and the sense of genuineness to it as entirely an Eastern composition. It would be made a plea against the authenticity if such genealogies were *not* found in it. Sufficient reason for the lists which commence the Books of Chronicles may be found in the date and circumstances of their composition. Whoever was the editor, we are sure that the work was prepared after the return from captivity and subsequent to the building of Zerubbabel's temple. The condition of the people called for such a review of the national history as would impress upon them their connection with a long and glorious past, and would freshen to their view the great principles on which the national prosperity had rested. "The people had not yet gathered up the threads of the old national life, broken by the Captivity. They required to be reminded, in the first place, of their entire history, of the whole past course of mundane events, and of the position which they themselves held among the nations of the earth. This was done, curiously and drily, but sufficiently, by means of genealogies." Such a picture of the past revived hope and encouraged high aspirations for the future. Such a summary became a virtual introduction to the Gospels, and these genealogies may be compared with those found in St. Matthew and St. Luke. But beyond the use of "genealogies" to Orientals generally, and to the returned captives of that age in particular, we inquire what comprehensive truths for the race, and so for us, they may be designed to impress. And we may fix attention on three: (1) the unity of God; (2) the unity of the race; (3) the unity of the Divine dealings with the race.

I. THE UNITY OF GOD. This was the first and essential truth committed to the trust of the Abrahamic race. This they were to conserve for the world during the long ages of man's "free experiment." It was opposed by the dualism of Persia, and the more common polytheism, which associated "gods" with particular localities and countries. It is significant that after the Captivity the Israelites never relapsed into idolatry; but such a genealogy as this helped them to realize fully that the God of their restoration was the "one God" of their fathers, and the God of the whole earth, who could not be limited in thought to any locality, nation, or name. Illustrate and enforce the jealousy of the Divine unity, and the position of this truth, as the very foundation of the Christian doctrine. There may be no question on this point; we, and all the generations that have ever lived, have to do with one God, the same, the only Lord God Almighty. If we are at peace with *him*, then we have none else to fear. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

II. THE UNITY OF THE RACE. All mankind, from the great first parent, Adam, are gathered together in the genealogy as one race. Thus is resisted the tendency of some nations to a pride of superiority over others, as though they were of another origin and kind; and the disposition of Israel to exclusiveness as a people specially favoured by God. God made all (Acts xvii. 26); God cares for all that he has made. And any apparently special dealings with one race are designed for the good of the whole. In these modern times attention is being freshly given to what is called the "solidarity" of the race, and that fact is assumed to explain much that seems

mysterious. But this is precisely the impression which Scripture designs to produce by its genealogies: with this further moral aim, that thus it confirms the *claims of the great human brotherhood*.

III. THE UNITY OF THE DIVINE DEALINGS WITH THE RACE. This is the chief impression made by a review of the world's past history. It may be illustrated in relation to (1) the orderings of Divine *providence*; (2) the requirements of Divine *Law*; (3) the judgments of Divine *wrath*; (4) the signs of a Divine *plan*; and (5) the fulfilment of Divine *promise*. We may firmly stay our hearts upon the world's experience of the unity of God's dealings. He is the Lord; he changes not: "His years are throughout all generations." This conviction concerning God is the basis of *social order*, of *earthly governments*, of the *redemptive scheme*, and of *man's ideal of righteousness*. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" These genealogies also stand in special relation to the promise of Messiah, the Saviour. They show a *Divine purpose* being wrought through all the ages, and reveal it accomplished at last in the Child of the Virgin Mary. But they teach that the dominion of this Messiah is wide as the race, and long as the ages. It is to be universal and everlasting. As a practical conclusion, it may be shown that the depressing influence exerted on us by the brevity of human life, and by the uprising and falling of dynasties and nations, is corrected by this revelation—in the genealogies—of the "Faithful One," "whose years are throughout all generations;" and who so solemnly declares, "All souls are mine."—R. T.

Vers. 1—4.—*The two great race-heads.* It is a significant thing that Scripture so distinctly affirms a double beginning for the human race, and sets before us two great human fathers. It is usual to speak of our "father Adam," but it would be at least as truthful to speak of our "father Noah." The period from Adam to Noah is given us very briefly, and it is scarcely more than a record of names. The one fact that comes out so prominently is that the first descendants of Adam lived lives that were so prolonged as to be almost inconceivable to us. And it is equally evident that the new race born of Noah was a race of short-livers, their allotted time on earth not being greatly in excess of our own. Here are facts so important as to be a fitting subject for consideration.

I. THE HEAD OF THE LONG-LIVERS. Adam was himself a long-lived man. We know that physical death was not the judgment on his sin, though the embittering of death by a smiting conscience, and by the sufferings of disease engendered by sin, undoubtedly was. How long men's earthly lives might have been if they had preserved the purity of Eden, we may only imagine, but some hint of it is given in the experiment God made of permitting even the banished ones to live for a thousand years. Can we conceive the Divine thought in permitting for a time these prolonged lives? 1. The earth was to be won by the human race; its stores were to be discovered, and their uses shown. This beginning of the arts of civilized life would make more rapid progress if one man could carry his experience over several generations, getting full time for the outworking of his thoughts and plans. We know too often now how sadly invention and discovery are stopped by the early death of the workers. 2. It might be expected that man would have a fuller and fairer moral trial if his time on earth were thus prolonged, and it might reasonably be hoped that the continuous experience of God's goodness would lead him to repentance and restored relations with God. This expectation, however, was not fulfilled, but man's self-will took advantage of the security of life, and grew into an awful majesty and pride of power, that necessitated the Divine interference in an overwhelming judgment. And it became declared for all the ages that too prolonged life is not the best thing for sinful and self-willed human creatures. It is a trust too great. It is better for man's highest welfare that upon him should constantly rest the sense of the brevity of life. He only perverted to his uttermost ruin the longer trust. So Adam is the father of a race that is passed and done with. We are not his children in the sense of being placed under the same *time-conditions*.

II. THE HEAD OF THE SHORT-LIVERS. This is the first and chief distinction between the races before and after the Flood. Noah had a cleansed earth to possess, but he carried over into it some relics of the older evil in his family, and so commenced the new trial under disability. Before, the race had kept in one stream; under the new

condition it divided into three great streams, represented by Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and it is found by scholars now that this is still the substantial division of the human race. But everywhere we find the condition of the *shortened life*. "Brief life is here our portion." And this is made one of the most important influences in the *moral* training of mankind. Show how it fills each day with importance; prevents any man reaching extreme degrees of crime; solemnizes with the shadow of coming judgment, etc. Now, he only "liveth long who liveth well;" and we need to pray with Moses, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Impress the duty of seeking at once *salvation*, and at once to be found *faithful*, in view of the brevity of our life. Compare Jacob's confession, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," etc.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*Nimrod, the first conqueror.* Previous to this verse we find recorded only *names*. Nimrod is recalled to mind by a brief but suggestive description. "He began to be mighty upon the earth." It is further narrated in Genesis (x. 9) that "he was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord." From this it appears that proverbs and legends grew up round his name. "The Eastern traditions make him a man of violent, lawless habits, a rebel against God, and a usurper of boundless authority over his fellow-men." It may suffice, however, to recognize in him the first person to develop war as an agency for subjecting some portions of the human family to the dominion of others. He is the first warrior, the progenitor of the Alexanders and Napoleons, the great world-conquerors. Many men live to serve their generation, and then they die and pass away out of thought, and their very names are forgotten. But they leave their work and the influence of their characters behind them: these can never die. This must be the lot of the great majority of mankind; and yet even thus every man may gain a gracious immortality. "He may still be remembered by *what he has done*." Other men leave their names behind affixed to some principle or truth, and then, though the name is to us no more than a name, it serves to recall the principle. And this we have in the case of Nimrod. His name brings up to our minds the ruin and the sin of man's masterfulness over his fellow-men. The ruin and the sin are set forth in very impressive forms in the cases of such conquerors as Nimrod; but the mischief is wrought still, and has been wrought through all the ages, in the smaller spheres of the family, society, the nation, and the Church. There are still Nimrods, who are bent on self-aggrandizement, and think little of the claims or the sufferings of others, as they tread on to place and wealth and power. The essence of their *masterfulness* is that they win and hold for *self*, not for *God*. To win and hold for God always tones our relations with others, and makes them tender, considerate, and gracious.

I. MAN'S MASTERFULNESS IMPERILS THE LIBERTIES OF HIS FELLOW-MAN. Nimrod was a hunter. We only hunt to bring *under subjection* to us. Nimrod was a hunter of *men*, that he might subject them as slaves to his authority. Illustrate in cases of other world-conquerors, and show how absorbing becomes the lust of power. All the nations of the earth have had to win the measures of liberty they enjoyed, by struggle and tears and blood, from those who held them in subjection. Eastern kings were always independent and tyrannical; and still, in the smaller spheres of associate life, the masterful men are always inconsiderate of others, and delight to make others subject to them. This masterfulness is sometimes the natural disposition; then it must be repressed and overcome, in the grace and help of God. At other times it is unduly fostered by the circumstances in which men are placed, and the deference that is paid to them; then we need to "watch and pray lest we enter into temptation." The "golden rule" cuts it down at the very root. He will never show himself to be masterful who strives "to do unto others as he would have others do unto him." Godliness and masterfulness can never dwell together in peace, for the godly man obeys the Divine Law, and seeks to "love his neighbour as himself."

II. MAN'S MASTERFULNESS IMPERILS THE HONOUR AND THE CLAIMS OF HIS GOD. It sets the man in the world's eye as *before God*, able to control things, needing no Divine aids, sufficient in himself; and so puts God out of men's thoughts, more especially if the masterful man *succeeds*. Compare Nebuchadnezzar's boasting, "Is not this great

Babylon, that I have built?" For multitudes Nimrod was the great hero, and men worshipped the masterful man. Surely it is a fatal thing for any one of us that, instead of standing on one side and showing God to our fellows, we stand *before him*, and only let men see ourselves. Yet this is still the temptation and the peril of the masterful man, in any and every sphere of life.—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*The divided earth.* Here a man's name is employed to fix an important historical fact. The word *Peleg* means "division," but it is uncertain whether allusion is intended to the dispersion of the people from Babel, or a later separation of the Shemitic race to which this Peleg belonged. "The two races which sprang from Eber soon separated very widely from each other—the one, Eber and his family, spreading north-westward towards Mesopotamia and Syria; the other, the Joktanites, southward into Arabia." We dwell on the general facts of the division, again and again, of the human race, and endeavour to understand how by this the Divine dealings with the race are illustrated. It is important that we should apprehend what may be called the *experimental character* of the Divine dealings with man. There is a true and reverent sense in which we may speak of God as *experimenting*. If it pleased him, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, to make men, and to entrust them with a measure of independence and free-will, then God designed to leave it to be seen how men would act under these conditions; and he must have intended to leave his relations with them open to modification, so that he might meet their varying requirements. God is said to "repeat" when he thus graciously adapts his dealings to new circumstances which man, in his self-will, may have created. Such a view of God's dealings is quite consistent with his *foreknowledge*. Man, in his most wilful ways, can never "take God at unawares," for he "seeth the end from the beginning." But he may see and know all without active interference until his own good time.

I. MAN IS ALONE—A SINGLE PAIR. What, may we say, is the experiment here? It is this: given every surrounding condition helpful; no others to confuse the mind or the choice; sufficient knowledge of what their God will have them do and not do;—will man use his independence aright? Will he set his will on God? Alas! he failed, "serving the creature more than the Creator." Man's moral trial could never be set under greater advantages; and it becomes evident, in the very first instance, that free-willed man's only hope rests on his receiving into his will the grace and the strength of the Spirit of his God. And this lesson is further pressed home by every experiment, whether it be made by the race, any portion of the race, or the individual. The issue is to convince us that it is "not in man that walketh to direct his steps." He must learn to say, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." The next form of the experiment is—

II. MAN IS IN ONE GREAT SOCIETY. Virtually dwelling together, in large and ever-increasing masses. What comes of this experiment? Utter lawlessness, such wild riotings, such debasing vice, that mankind is utterly and hopelessly corrupt, and God can but cleanse the earth of their presence and their defilement. Man is no stronger for moral right when he is found in masses than when he is found alone. Nay, aggregation only gives man's will more terrible possibilities of evil—power to develop crimes that debase to the uttermost. The third experiment is the one which God has been pleased to continue through the long ages—

III. MAN IS IN A NUMBER OF SOCIETIES, VARIOUSLY LOCATED AND VARIOUSLY RELATED. God never lets these grow too large; famine, pestilence, war, and emigration are always putting limits on excessive populations. So humanity repeats its moral trial under all possible natural conditions, in plains, on mountain sides, at sea-boards, etc., ever proving again and again its absolute need of the Divine strengthening of the will for the attaining of all moral good. Impress these points. 1. God presides over the moral culture of not too large communities. 2. God works by the special genius with which he is pleased to endow particular nations. Illustrate by Rome, Greece, Judea, etc. 3. God works by the mutual relations of the divided nations. Show how these are maintained in the interests of commerce. 4. God works to secure the permanent moral unity of the race in its dependence on him, and to this end he has graciously introduced his *redemptive agency*.—R. T.

Ver. 27.—*Abraham's double name.* F. W. Robertson has some suggestive remarks on the significance of ancient names in his sermon on 'Jacob's Wrestling' (vol. i. pp. 41, 42). He recognizes in the Hebrew history three periods in which names and words bore very different characters. We deal with the first of these periods, when "names meant truths, and words were the symbols of realities. The characteristics of the names given then were simplicity and sincerity. They were drawn from a few simple sources: either from some characteristic of the individual, as Jacob, the 'supplanter'; or from the idea of family, as Benjamin, 'son of my right hand'; or from the conception of the tribe or nation, then gradually consolidating itself; or, lastly, from the religious idea of God." Scripture attaches significance to names, and the precise name indicates the minuteness of the Divine knowledge and the tenderness of the Divine care: "I have called thee by name," "I will give him a new name," etc. So a change of a man's name may seal to him the fact of new, more important, and more tender Divine relations. Explain the precise force of the two names, *Ab-ram* and *Ab-ra-hum*, and give details of the occasion chosen for changing the names (Gen. xvii.). Then illustrate and enforce these three points—

I. THE DIVINE INTEREST IN A MAN'S LIFE. This is so minutely detailed in such lives as these of Abraham and Jacob, that we may each gain the impression of its being the fact concerning ourselves. We are under the *eye* and in the *hand*.

II. THE DIVINE RECOGNITION OF A MAN'S VIRTUE. Illustrate by the reason given for God's telling Abraham of his proposed judgment on Sodom; by David's appeal, "Judge me according to my integrity;" and Christ's address to the Church at Ephesus, "I know thy works" (Rev. ii. 2).

III. THE DIVINE COMMUNICATION OF DIVINE APPROBATION. We indeed may not look to get a change of name, and yet we, too, may be quite sure that our progress in the Divine life has all its stages noticed and marked by God, and, it may be, sealed with a now "unknown name." We want to *see* the stages of our spiritual growth; it is enough that we learn from Abraham's double name how God *watches* them, and surely marks them down ready for the *by-and-by*.—R. T.

Ver. 43.—*The relations of Edom and Israel.* The historical and geographical relations of the two nations may be given. Those of Israel are familiar, those of Edom may be thus indicated: Mount Seir, where Esau settled, was a rugged tract, east of the great valley of the Arabah. It consisted of limestone hills, with red and variegated sandstone cliffs and ridges, marked by that peculiar ruddy tinge of colour so consonant with the name of Edom (red). Kings reigned in Edom long before any descendant of Jacob occupied a throne. Eight Edomitish monarchs are enumerated in the early records. The refusal of Edom to allow Israel to march through the country on the route to Canaan both expressed and intensified the family enmity which came as the fruitage of Jacob's deception. No friendly intercourse could be expected between the nations. The relations between the two peoples, descended from one parent, may be used to illustrate the way in which family and social *wrong-doing* will work out into practical evil in the succeeding generations. And, so treating the history of these two peoples, we may learn the valuable and impressive lesson that the sinner may be forgiven and personally accepted with God, but the natural and necessary fruitage of his *wrong-doing* cannot be stopped, and cannot always even be checked. Vindicate the Divine goodness and righteousness in thus permanently attaching penalties of suffering to sin, and letting these come upon others beside the *wrong-doer*. From the history the following topics may be fully detailed:—

I. THE ORIGINAL WRONG. It was a double wrong. Esau was meanly defrauded of his birthright by his brother taking unfair advantage of his fatigue and hunger. And he was, by a wicked scheme, dodged out of his paternal blessing. Because he was so manifestly the wronged party, we may fail to appraise aright Esau's personal character; but we cannot wonder that he went forth to life with the sense of the grievous wrong done to him rankling in his mind. It was a grievous and shameful wrong, which nothing can extenuate or excuse; an utterly selfish and unbrotherly act. Such an act as bears its natural penalty in *hated*, and all the mischief that hatred can contrive to do.

II. THE DIVINE FORGIVENESS. Give the scene at Mambreaim, and show how it bore relation to the sin as *against God*. Scripture urges that sin seemingly committed

against our brother is really committed against God. "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." So Divine forgiveness has ever to be sought *first*.

III. THE BROTHERLY RECONCILIATION. This seems to have been complete and satisfactory, yet it was too much a matter of *impulse*. Jacob was afraid to presume on it. And too often such reconciliations only prove temporary, and the old enmities come back again; and the "last state is worse than the first."

IV. THE NATIONAL ENMITIES AND ENVIES. These had been started before the reconciliation of the brothers, and they could not be stopped. They grew in strength as the years rolled by. They formed a predisposition to judge each other unworthily, and see each other on the bad side only. And as time wore on the evil broke out into open war, and brother races shed each other's blood (see 1 Sam. xiv. 47; 2 Sam. viii. 14; 1 Kings xi. 15, 16; ch. xviii. 19, 20, etc.). In some of these wars and sieges such cruelties were practised as can only be explained by the intensity of the national feud and hatred. So the early wrong worked out into misery for both parties. "He that soweth to the flesh ever reaps corruption." Earnestly warn against wrong-doing in *family* and in *social* relationships; they are often the secret cause of long feud, war, and woe. We need to "think, not on our own things, but on the things of others;" we should be found jealous of our *brother's* rights. In the way of righteousness and brotherliness and charity ever flow life and peace and fellowship, all human blessedness, and the all-hallowing Divine favour.—R. T.

Chapters i. and ii.—*Genealogies.* In the meaning of genealogical names as translated from the original, volumes of spiritual truth lie hid. In the present day names are arbitrarily given, generally because they belong to some member of the family; indeed, in most cases, for no other reason. With the Jews it was different. It was because of some feature in the *parent's* character or some of *his* family, or because of some future relation to prophecy, or because of some calling to which the child was to be trained. Jacob, Samuel, Solomon, and many others are instances of this fact; hence from these names much information may be gathered as to their spiritual and natural life. The inner history of families is recorded, revealing the spiritual and natural life of each which ordinary history could but imperfectly bring to light. The profession or calling of the individual or the family, or the Lord's special dealings with it, or some event in life with all its results,—these are the origin of most of these names, and bring to light a hidden history. A great writer has said that Shakespeare opens out to us much of the inner history and character of the day in which he lived—the manners and customs, the thoughts, habits, and feelings—which ordinary history never could write. This illustrates the great importance to the Christian student of studying these genealogies of the Old Testament, so generally, if not altogether, overlooked. And what is the spiritual lesson we may learn from this portion of our subject? That just as these names are the embodiment of spiritual truths and principles of life, and replete with eventful realities, so should it be in each of our lives. Nothing should be meaningless. Spiritual truth should permeate the smallest and meanest duties. There is a history in even the smallest action. There is no such thing as a trifle. Let us stamp everything with that which will survive us; with that which will speak, to generations yet unborn, of truth and righteousness and God; so that as *they* read *our* history they may gather from it what we gather from these names—great principles, which may animate and encourage them, and thus "make our lives sublime," thus live so as to be missed, that it may be said of us "He being dead yet speaketh." But what was it made "the fathers" put Divine meanings into their names? It was that God was to them a reality; that everything connected with him had for them a deep and solemn meaning. This so impressed the mind and heart that it found its expression in their names and in the smallest events of their every-day life. Thus must God be to us if there is to be the impress of Divine and imperishable memorials in our history. Not only the language of a nation, but its spiritual life, is written in its names and words. Read in this light, what meaning is thrown into these dry genealogical trees of the Old Testament! How replete with spiritual instruction to the Bible student!—W.

Chapters i. and ii.—*The genealogies in relation to Christ.* It will be seen that

many of the names in these genealogies have "El" or "Jah" as a prefix or termination—the former God as Creator, the latter God in covenant or as Redeemer. Thus each individual bearing this Divine name is seen in direct personal relation to God in these aspects of his character. But the most important consideration in these genealogies is that they contain that of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can trace the thread through all the names till we reach the holy family. It runs like a vein of silver through generations and families, many of whom, despite the holy meaning of their names, bring up a history of shame and sorrow. This doubtless is the reason why they are so faithfully recorded. They are all here to continue the genealogy of Christ—to lead up eventually to him. He is the *fruit* of every genealogical tree. We see the seed, the blade, the blossom, the flower, and at last we have the fruit—Jehovah Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, as he appeared among men. All that is repulsive or flagrant in the genealogical tree only serves to bring into more striking contrast the fruit that grows out of it. The summer fruit has sprung out of the corrupt ground, and has had to contend on every side with elements at war with its very existence. Sometimes these genealogies, in the very order of their record in the sacred volume, contain within themselves a prophecy pointing to him. An instance of this in illustration may be found in Gen. v., the leading names in which, when translated in the order there recorded, contain the beautiful prophecy, "The blessed God shall come down teaching, and his light shall give life and consolation to men." Sometimes names of this kind foreshadow some special aspect of Christ's work. We have the names of El-kanah, Abi-jah, Mori-jah or Moriah. This last-named is the mount on which Isaac, the type of Christ, was offered, and on this mount Solomon's temple was built. "Mor" signifies "bitterness," "Jah" means "Jehovah." Thus the temple is built on the "bitterness," or sufferings, of Jehovah. So also the spiritual temple is founded upon the *cross* of Christ. The genealogical tree of Christ runs through the names in these chapters. There are several truths forced upon our notice as we think of this. First, grace is not hereditary. In the lineal descent of the Lord Jesus we find idolaters and slaves. We see it every day. Manasseh is son to Hezekiah, Josiah is the son of Amon. It is still true, and will ever be so. They who are of the family of God are "born not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Secondly, as Jesus Christ *came* through all sorts of people, so he came to *save* and bless all sorts of people—saints and sinners, bond and free, rich and poor. He took the humanity of each without sin, that he might bless them. "This man eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners." Though on his throne of glory, these he still calls and loves to gather round him. Lord Macaulay tells us of a celebrated artist who made a beautiful piece of statuary which was the admiration of Europe. But he had a poor boy who was his apprentice. He gathered up the broken fragments that fell from the master's hand, and with these he made a work which eclipsed his master's, so that the latter died of a broken heart. Jesus Christ, the despised and rejected carpenter's Son, has stooped down to our fallen world and gathered up the fragments of our fallen humanity, and is forming them into a kingdom which shall eclipse in grandeur and glory every other.—W.

Chapters i. and ii.—*The genealogies in relation to the Church and the world.* Looking over these chapters, we find prominent mention of "families" and "sons." These are the two words which, constantly used, are replete with meaning. The sons form the families. How important to family life out of which all that is great and good has issued, that the "sons" who bear the names of "El" and "Jah" should be nurtured and trained to a life worthy of those high and holy names! Where this is not the case, *there* is the real breach of the third commandment. The Name of the Lord God has been "taken in vain." Our "families" will be what the "sons" make them, and our Churches and the world will ever be what the "family" is. Family training in the fear of God will send forth messengers that will be the brightness of the Church and the blessing of the world. All real degeneracy in one and the other will ever be traceable to the "family," and ultimately to the "sons." Mothers, think of this! It *all*, under God, is in *your* hands. And as we saw in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus that he passed through all sorts of people, so we see it here in his people. Here we find Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, all honoured names, mingled with names worthless and infamous. It is for the same reason, to show that grace is not hereditary. In the first

two verses of the second chapter we have the names of the family of Israel. The sons of Israel are mentioned in their order of *natural* birthright. But immediately in the same chapter, in the *family* enumeration, this order is set aside, and instead of beginning with Reuben, according to the natural order, the record begins with Judah. Thus grace is set in the forefront, and nature put into the background. The Bible is not the record of nature, but of grace. The history of one little tribe, occupying a strip of land not larger than Wales, fills the entire pages of the Old Testament, while huge empires are passed over in silence. This is in accordance with the character of the Book. The history of this little tribe fills its pages because it is the history of the kingdom of God. Its design was to manifest Christ. Apart from him the Word does not acknowledge history in any sense. Neither a nation nor an individual has any history before God, except as connected with him. Hence Assyria and Babylon are comparatively overlooked, and all record is centred in Jerusalem. Hence Sennacherib is barely mentioned, while whole chapters are filled with Abraham and Moses and Joseph. Hence Reuben is put into the background and Judah into the forefront. This prominence given to Judah over Reuben was because the right and privileges of primogeniture had been given to him, and because from his tribe Christ was to spring. Thus in the very foreground of this book Christ is placed. Judah is also shown to have pre-eminence simply because of Christ. It is so now. Christ must be first; he is the Alpha and Omega. The opening chapter of every history, every event, every duty, every pleasure, should be him. If he be not in the forefront of each one and the centre round which everything converges, there is no history there worthy of the name; there is no record there before God, however great it may be before men. There is no name in heaven without this, though it may be emblazoned on the marble tablets of the world for ever. But only Christ is true. There is a blot on every escutcheon but his. Scarcely is Judah's pre-eminence brought before us ere we see the dark picture of sin in it. Er and Achan stand out pre-eminently as blots on Judah's fair fame. Yes, on the very lineage of the Messiah himself there is written, as with a sunbeam, "Cease ye from man." Lust and murder are the dark lines drawn by the Holy Spirit on the beautiful picture. Only the Spirit of God can make a Christian. And the man may put on all the garments of a Christian—the knowledge of truth, the doctrines of truth, the zeal for truth, the profession of truth in its holiest and purest form, and yet carry through life an unchanged heart, the very light which he possesses so dazzling him with its brightness as to keep him from seeing his terrible depravity and feeling his need of a Saviour. Reader, are you one of these?—W.

Vers. 1-27.—Natural and spiritual paternity. There may not be much that is positively *instructive* in these genealogies; yet there may be found that which is *suggestive* in them. They invite us to think of—

I. **THE ADAMIC, OR NATURAL, FATHERHOOD.** (Ver. 1.) It is a high distinction to be the progenitor of an illustrious "family" or of a powerful tribe; still more so of a whole nation; and the highest of its kind to be the father of the human race. But the honour is not without its serious qualifications. 1. It is of an inferior order. It is "after the flesh;" it pertains to the lower kingdom; it does not stand in the first rank in the sight of Divine wisdom. 2. It involves shame as well as honour. If in his later days Adam could boast of the happiness and triumphs which his descendants enjoyed, he must have been covered with confusion as he witnessed the sorrow and the humiliation which they endured. By his fatherhood of our race he became the parent of guilt and shame as well as of virtue and honour. They who sigh for the honour and joy of parentage may well reflect that, if our first father could have foreseen the misery and degradation to which his sons and daughters would sink, he would (or might well) have shrunk from the high distinction he enjoyed.

II. **THE ABRAHAMIC, OR SPIRITUAL, FATHERHOOD.** (Ver. 28.) It is true that Abraham, as his name suggests, was the father of a multitude, and that it was of him, *as concerning the flesh*, the Messiah came. But it is also true that our Master taught us to think of the Hebrew patriarch as the father of all faithful souls rather than as the mere progenitor of a people. The true children of Abraham are those who "do his works" (John viii. 39)—those who hear and heed the Word of God. Not they who are "the

seed of Abraham" are the children of the promise (Rom. ix. 8), but they who have the spirit of the believing and obedient patriarch; they who are Jews, "not outwardly, but inwardly, . . . whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. ii. 28, 29). This is the paternity to which we should aspire, and to which we may attain. By (1) cultivating a Christian character and spirit; (2) living a blameless and beautiful life; (3) speaking, in love and wisdom, enlightening and redeeming truth;—we may become parents of faithful souls: we may be the means of quickening to newness of life those who, in their turn, will lead others also into the way of life. We may thus generate sources of holy influence through which, in distant times, the erring shall be restored and the dead shall live.—C.

Ver. 19.—*The human race; unity and division.* In the midst of this genealogical table we have a statement that "the earth was divided." We are reminded of the same fact of the dispersion of mankind by the reference to different families and separate countries. But all are shown to spring from one source, to have a common origin in the first father whose name heads the list, and is the first word of the Book of Chronicles. We are thus admonished of that twofold fact which is daily confronting us.

I. THE DIVERSITY WHICH MANKIND PRESENTS. These are distinguished from one another by many features, and are separated from one another by many barriers. Distinguishing or dividing us, man from man, are (1) physical obstacles (seas, mountains, varieties of climate); (2) colour; (3) creed; (4) language; (5) social habits, mental tastes, and moral dispositions.

II. THE ESSENTIAL ONENESS OF THE HUMAN WORLD. Notwithstanding all interposing obstacles and all separating divergences, man is everywhere the same. The blood of one human father is in his veins. One human nature, bodily and spiritual, he inherits; above it he cannot rise, and beneath it he cannot fall. He is the son of Adam, and *he* "was the son of God" (Luke iii. 38). Sin has scattered and slain him, but he may rise and be revivified. In him still are those germs of good which, under heavenly culture, may spring into the most perfect flowers that can adorn the garden of the Lord. In mankind, under all conceivable diversities, are (1) the same animal instincts, (2) the same family attachments, (3) the same capacity of mental culture, (4) the same spiritual nature, which is able to receive the truth and know the will and live the life of the eternal God himself. The unity and diversity of our kind suggest to us: 1. That there are variations and separations which are due to God's providence rather than to our sin. These are either to be cheerfully borne or bravely and intelligently overcome. They are given us either to try our faith and patience or to excite our enterprise and activity. 2. That there are separations and distinctions which are the penalty of sin; these should humble us. 3. That in the gospel of Christ we have resources which can raise the lowest and reunite the most spiritually distant. The hour will come when the "earth that was divided" so long ago will be united in one most blessed bond, worshipping one God, loving one Father, trusting one Saviour, living one life, travelling to one home.—C.

Vera. 47, 48.—*Though transient, not vain.* As we read these following verses and find one king mentioned and then another, with simply the record of his name, his reign, and his death, we feel how swiftly flows the current of human life, how many generations have come and gone, how slight attention posterity can spare for those who were once great and honoured. Three thoughts befit the theme—

I. To EACH MAN IN HIS TIME HIS HERITAGE SEEMS LARGE AND LASTING. No doubt Samlah of Masrekah looked eagerly forward to the occupancy of his seat of power; rejoiced greatly as he took possession; said to himself, "Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong;" thought that many days of honour and wealth and joy were before him; was one more instance of the truth that "All men think all men mortal but themselves." His day of authority and enjoyment seemed bright enough to him in anticipation, and he rejoiced in his heritage. To every human eye a long and happy human life seems, at the outset and for some way on, a very possible and desirable thing. But to us, who look back on that which is over, it seems that—

II. THE BEST EARTHLY ESTATE IS A PAINFULLY TRANSIENT THING. What, to all

these and to all other kings of all other countries, are their sceptres now? What have they been for many thousand years? Their grave is not more quiet, nor is it better known, than the last resting-place of their meanest subjects. Looking back, it seems as if their honour was but a brief flash that struck a sudden splendour and then went out into the darkness. A brief day is ours below, a little sunshine for a few last-fleeting hours—

“And then night sweeps along the plain
And all things fade away.”

But we have a third correcting thought, namely—

III. THAT OUR SHORT EARTHLY LIFE IS LONG ENOUGH TO HOLD AND TO WORK MUCH ENDURING GOOD. Though our human life is transient, and though its beauty and honour soon pass away, yet it is not lived in vain. Spent in the fear of God, devoted to the glory of Christ, and having regard to the well-being of the world, it has an excellency which true wisdom does not despise. It is not in vain (1) that it contains pure and ennobling joy; (2) that it illustrates Divine principles; (3) that it diffuses bounty and blessedness on every hand; (4) that it leaves behind it something better than it found—the harvest of its own thought and toil; (5) that it has been a preparation for a wider sphere and a larger life beyond.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

The interest of this chapter owes something to the several unsatisfied questions which it suggests, to difficult and knotty points which nevertheless do not altogether counsel despair, and to occasional significant indications of sources drawn upon by the compiler, certainly quite additional to the contents of the existing books of the Old Testament.

We know something of what we have to expect when the name of Israel, or Jacob, is announced in the first verse, with his twelve sons—those “patriarchs,” some of whom (certainly not as many as eleven, for Reuben was absent, and, with scarcely a doubt, Benjamin), “moved with envy, sold into Egypt Joseph,” the twelfth (Acts vii. 9). We here enter, in fact, upon the genealogies and tables and enumerations of collateral lines of “all Israel,” to which the whole of the following seven chapters are devoted (ch. ix. 1). This second chapter leads off with the most important line of descent of the twelve—that of Judah. And the contents of this chapter do not exhaust the one line, which, on the contrary, stretches as far as to ch. iv. 23. Within these limits there are just that amount of repetition (ch. ii. 3; iv. 1, etc.) and appearance of confusion which betoken the recourse of the compiler to various records and sources of information—themselves sometimes but fragmentary, and probably to mere memory and the tradition that depends upon it.

The contents of this chapter are best mastered by noticing that they consist of: 1. The table of Israel’s twelve sons (vers. 1, 2). 2. The line of Judah to the stage

where it branches into three great-grandsons (vers. 3—9). 3. The line of Judah pursued through those three branches to a point manifestly significant in one, and presumably so in the others (vers. 10—55).

Vers. 1, 2.—1. TABLE OF ISRAEL’S TWELVE SONS. The twelve sons of Israel, not in the order of age (cf. Gen. xxix. 31—xxx. 24; xxxv. 16—19), nor exactly in the order of children of wives as against those of handmaids (Gen. xxv. 23—26), nor in that of the aged father’s dying blessing (Gen. xl ix.), nor in that of Exod. i. 2—4. It is the place of Dan which disturbs the fittest order, and Keil suggests that his place in this text is accounted for by Rachel’s desire that her handmaid’s child should be accounted her own; but surely this was not exceptional, but applied to all or most of such cases, and should have been far rather taken into consideration in any of the other lists than in this. However accounted for, the order is—*first*, the six sons of the first wife Leah; *secondly*, the elder son of Rachel’s handmaid Bilhah; *thirdly*, the two sons of the loved wife Rachel; *fourthly*, the other son of Rachel’s handmaid Bilhah; *lastly*, the two sons of Zilpah, handmaid of Leah. As this order corresponds with nothing in our Old Testament, it may serve as one slight indication that the compiler of Chronicles was not dependent on these records alone. The Hebrew text and the Septuagint accord exactly with the Authorized Version here.

Vers. 3—9.—2. THE LINE OF JUDAH, TO HIS THREE GREAT-GRANDSONS. The line of Judah is, with a well-known object, the first to be taken up, although Judah stands fourth of Israel’s sons. Judah has five sons: three, Er, Onan, Shelah, by a Canaan-

ites, the daughter of **Shad**; and two, **Pharez** and **Zerah**, by **Tamar**, his own daughter-in-law, under the circumstances described (Gen. xxxviii. 6—30). There all these names are found in exact accord in the Authorized Version, in the Hebrew text, and in the Septuagint. The Septuagint Version, however (Gen. xxxviii. 2), by an evident inaccuracy of translation, gives **Shua** as the name, not of the father, but of the daughter, $\delta\tau\omega\mu\alpha\zeta\alpha\mu\alpha$. Parallel passages are also found (Gen. xlvi. 12; Numb. xxvi. 19—22). **Er** and **Onan** died without issue, and the descendants of **Shelah** are not mentioned till we reach ch. iv. 21—23. The line is now carried on by the twin sons of **Tamar** (vers. 5, 6). **Pharez**, with two sons, **Hezron** and **Hamul** (Gen. xlvi. 12; Ruth iv. 18), and **Zerah**, with five sons, **Zimri** (or **Zabdi**, Josh. vii. 1), **Ethan**, **Heman**, **Calcol**, **Dara** (or with many manuscripts, followed by the **Targum**, **Syriac**, and **Arabic** versions, **Darda**). If these last four names are not identical with those in 1 Kings iv. 31, they are not to be found in any available connection elsewhere, and the last two not at all. Upon this supposition, it is held by some that this very passage proves that the compiler drew on resources not possessed by us. The weight of evidence seems, however, largely in favour of the persons being the same. (See Gilbert Barrington's 'Old Testament Genealogies,' i. 206—208, well summarized in art. "Darda," Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' for as competent a discussion of the question as the present data will allow.) It needs to be constantly remembered that an enumeration like the above, of five so-called *sons*, does not necessarily involve their being five *brothers*, although in this case it looks the more as though they were so, as it is said five of them in all.

Ver. 7.—We have then so far seven grandsons to **Judah**, when a new name, unmentioned before, is introduced—**Carmi**. He is neither described as one of the seven grandsons nor as descended from any one of them, but unenviably enough is marked as the father of **Achar**—later form of **Achan**—the troubler of **Israel**. Josh. vii. 1—18 supplies the missing link, and states that **Caimi** is son of **Zimri** (**Zabdi**), one of the aforesaid seven grandsons. By the punishment of death, visited upon this **Achar**, with his sons and daughters (Josh. vii. 24, 25), it may be presumed that the line of **Judah** through him became extinct.

Ver. 8.—The line through **Ethan**, another of the seven grandsons, seems to stop with **Azariah**, a name found nowhere else.

Ver. 9.—3. THE LINE OF **JUDAH** PURSUED THROUGH THE THREE BRANCHES OF **HEZRON**'S SONS. The track of genealogy then returns upon **Pharez**, and to the name

of **Hezron**, the most important by far of the seven grandsons. His three sons are announced, and, as beginning with the first-born, so presumably in order of seniority. They are: (A), **Jerahmeel**; (B), **Ram**; (C), **Chelubai**.

Vers. 10—15.—(B) **Ram** (the **Aram** of the Septuagint and of Matt. i. 3; Luke iii. 33) is taken first in order, at once to push on the lineage of **Judah** to the great landmark **DAVID**, who is reached at the seventh generation from **Ram** (Ruth iv. 19—22; Matt. i. 3—5; Luke iii. 31—33), his name being ranked last of seven brothers only, sons of **Jesse**.

Ver. 11.—**Salma**, Hebrew שְׁלָמָה ; but Ruth iv. 20, שְׁלָמִי and in following verse שְׁלָמִי . The variation of the first two of these forms has many parallels, as between **Chronicles** and the earlier Old Testament Scriptures.

Vers. 13—15 give us what we have not elsewhere, the names of the fourth, fifth, and sixth sons of **Jesse**, viz. **Nathaneel**, **Raddai** (but see 1 Kings i. 8), and **Ozem**. But, on the other hand, they make it appear that **David** was the seventh of seven, instead of (1 Sam. xiv. 10, 11; xvii. 12) the eighth of eight sons. The missing son, any way, belongs to the seventh place. The **Syriac** and **Arabic** versions have taken the **Elihu** of ch. xxvii. 18, and put him in this place. Others, following the Septuagint, suppose this **Elihu**, if strictly a brother of **David**, to be **Eliab**, the oldest. The explanation of the absence of the name here may be that he died early and without issue, and would accordingly be the less wanted in a genealogical register.

Vers. 16, 17.—These verses do not say that **David** "begat" **Zeruiah** and **Abigail**, but that these two were sisters of the foregoing seven brethren. Light is thrown upon this by 2 Sam. xvii. 25, which says that **Abigail** was the daughter of one **Nahash**, and that **Zeruiah** was her sister. But it is to leave us in greater darkness as to who **Nahash** was: whether **Nahash** was another name for **Jesse**, or the name of **Jesse**'s wife, or the name of a former husband of **Jesse**'s wife, to whom she bore these two daughters before she became wife to **Jesse**, and that former husband possibly none other than the **Ammonite** king (2 Sam. x. 2)—or whether none of these conjectures be near the truth, some of which on the face of them seem unlikely enough, is as yet unsettled. Meantime it is worth remembering that **Zeruiah** named one of her celebrated sons, and probably the eldest of them, **Abishai**, after **Jesse**, **Ishai** being the same as our **Jesse**; yet from the above premises it is taken that she was strictly sister of **Abigail**, and therefore was not really related to **Jesse**. The

subject is treated interestingly under the various names in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary.' The husband of Zeruiah is given nowhere, while the husband of Abigail, here called Jether the Ishmeelite, is, in the passage already referred to (2 Sam. xvii. 25), called Ithra (which is a slightly altered form of his name), an *Israelite*, with little doubt an error for *Ishmaelite*. In the same passage also her own name appears as אֶבְנָת, instead of אֶבְנָה, though many manuscripts have this latter.

Vers. 18—20.—(C) Chelubai. The descendants of Caleb (Chelubai), placed third of Hezron's sons, are next dealt with; but the subject is almost immediately interrupted by resumed reference to Hezron (vers. 21—24), and by the table of Jerahmeel and his descendants (vers. 25—41); after which the table of Caleb, apparently the same Caleb, is carried on (vers. 42—49). Taking these broken portions, however, just as they come, we are immediately met by a series of uncertainties and surprises. Ver. 18 is obscure in that it says Caleb had children by Azubah (the Hebrew construction also unusual), a wife, or indeed strictly a *woman* (not even using the ordinary formula "his wife"), and by Jerioth, of whom nothing is said; and the verse adds obscurity by saying, *her sons are these*, without plainly indicating to which woman reference is made. It may be safely presumed, however, from what follows, that Azubah is intended, though no other part of Scripture helps us by so much as a mention of the son's names to determine it certainly. Meantime one Hebrew manuscript and the Chaldee Paraphrase are found to omit the words "and by Jerioth." The Vulgate, and the Syriac and Arabic versions, make Jerioth one of the *children*—possibly a daughter—of Caleb and Azubah, and this view is supported by Kennicott and Houbigant (Barrington's 'Genealogies,' i. 210). The tone of ver. 19 may certainly be held to offer some countenance to the assumption that either Jerioth's name ought to appear as that of a child or not at all. The name Ephrath in this verse abounds with interest. The ancient name of the town of Bethlehem, and also apparently of a district round it, is the same word which is found here as the name of a woman. In either case it is more generally written אֶפְרָתָה, as even in the two other appearances of it in this very chapter. Two manuscripts, followed by two ancient editions, and apparently by the Vulgate, substitute *aleph* for the above final *he*. In Mich. v. 1, Bethlehem is found united with Ephrathah in one compound word. The mother Ephrath is here interesting for her descendants given, her son Hur, grandson

Uri, and great-grandson Bezaleel. Further reference to these is made in ver. 50.

Vers. 21—24.—The first interruption to the record of Cal-b's posterity is now occasioned by a resumed reference to Hezron, who at the age of threescore took to wife (as it seems from ver. 24) Abiah, sister to Gilead, daughter of the eminent man Machir, who was Manasseh's oldest son by an Aramitess concubine (ch. vii. 14). Two sons of Hezron by Abiah are given (the latter of them a posthumous child), but the elder having a son called Jair, tracked, no doubt as one who became famous by the number of cities he took. He was thus connected on the father's side with a great family of Judah, and on the mother's with a great family of Manasseh. He is probably not the Jair of Judg. x. 3, with his "thirty sons, thirty ass colts, and thirty cities." And τὸν Κλαῖον, Mark v. 22) is not τὸν of 2 Sam. xxi. 19; ch. xx. 5. Evident stress is laid on his maternal descent. Thus (Numb. xxxii. 41) he is styled son of Manasseh, and hence also the explanation of the last clause of ver. 23, *infra*, all these belonged to the sons of Machir the father of Gilead. Some of the cities alluded to are the Havoth-Jair (Numb. xxxii. 41; Deut. iii. 14; Josh. xiii. 30), Englished as the "groups of dwellings of Jair," on which see interesting note in Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine' (edit. 1866), vocabulary, pp. 526, 527. They lay in the trans-Jordanic district Trachouitis, the modern El-leyah and Jebel-Hauran. It is not possible to harmonize exactly the numbers of the cities given here with those in passages quoted above; nor is the translation of ver. 23, Authorized Version, very certainly the correct one. E. Bertheau, in his 'Die Bücher der Chronik erklärt; xv. Kurzgefr. exegetisches Handbuch. z. A. T.' translates, "And Geshur and Aram took the Havoth-Jair from them with Kenath and her daughter-towns, sixty cities." "Took" is supposed to mean here "retook," or "recovered." Though this suits the Hebrew syntax better, it does not suit so well our immediate context; nor have we any other information of such recovering of them.

Ver. 23.—Geshur was a small district between Argob and Bashan; and Aram, commonly translated Syria, i.e. the ancient Syria, viz. the territory of Damascus. Kenath, rechristened by its subdler Nobah (Numb. xxxii. 42), and retaining this name at the time of Gideon, and Zeba and Salmunnah subsequently vindicated the life of its old name, and regained it, replaced in the present day by Kenawat. And the towns thereof; Hebrew literally, *her daughters*; i.e. the small, subordinate groups of people (Numb. xxi. 25, "All the

villages thereof," literally, *daughters*). All these belonged to the sons of Machir, the father of Gilead, might perhaps be open to the translation, "All these were the possessions of Machir, the possessor of Gilead."

Ver. 24.—The remaining verse of this section brings another point of difficulty unsolved yet. No place Caleb-ephratah is known, and no sort of accounting for Hezron dying anywhere but in Egypt, whither he went with Jacob (Gen. xlvi. 12), is producible. The Vulgate has *Ingressus est Caleb ad Ephratam*, but our Hebrew text cannot be made to justify it, if for nothing else, for want of a preposition ^{בְּ} before "Ephratah." This reading of the Vulgate has suggested to others that by a slight but still gratuitous alteration of our Hebrew text ^{בְּ} might be substituted for the preposition ^{בְּ} prefixed to the name of Caleb; but upon *that* showing we have to suppose that Caleb did leave Egypt on his own account and travel to Ephratah, and then there fails any strong connection (but see *Septuagint, in loc.*) between that fact and what is said about Abiah. Still, the explanation might receive some countenance from the fact that it is said that Abiah's son became the father—or *founder*—of Tekoa, a place near Bethlehem, in South Judah (1 Sam. xxx. 14). Bertheau has at this point suggested that Caleb-ephratah, instead of being included in Neger-Caleb, may rather, in *distinction* from it, designate the northern portion of the territory of Caleb. The solution of the problem will probably not yield to anything but a justly restored text.

Vera. 25-41.—We reach here the second interruption in the account of Caleb's posterity. (A) Jerahmeel, though the eldest Hezronite son, has as yet been passed by in favour of Ram and in favour of Caleb, so far as regards part of his descendants. Jerahmeel himself is mentioned nowhere else, but his people collectively are (1 Sam. xxvii. 10; xxx. 29). On the other hand, this place *alone* supplies the lists of names, and we have not the aid of any collation. Ver. 25 purports in the Authorized Version to give five sons of Jerahmeel by his first wife, of name not given. The absence of the conjunction "and," however, in the Hebrew text before the last name, Ahijah, suggests that this may be the name of the first wife, the presence of which seems greatly required by the contents of the next verse. Some particle being required, Le Clerc, accepting the suggestion of Junius and Tremellius, proposes to supply *וְ*, and Bertheau the same preposition, but in a simpler form, prefixed to the name Ahijah (see Barrington's 'Genealogies,' i. 180).

Ver. 26.—For עטרה, one manuscript has אטרא, and another קטירה.

Ver. 28.—One manuscript makes Nadab and Abishur two additional sons of Onam, by omitting the words and the sons of Shammai.

Ver. 29.—**אַבְרָהָם**, **אַבְרָהָם**, are the readings of various manuscripts in this verse.

Vers. 31-35.—The Authorized Version is not justified in substituting children for the Hebrew "sons;" the object evidently being to make this statement reconcilable with ver. 34, which says that Sheshan had only daughters. The difficulty can be removed, possibly, by supposing that Ahlai died (yet see ch. xi. 41), or that, at the time to which ver. 34 refers, only daughters were in question. Wall's conjecture, that Ahlai of ver. 31 is the same with Attai of ver. 35, would have more probability if *aleph* were not the initial letter of the one, and *ayin* of the other. Still, as all the other "sons" of this passage mean sons strictly, it would be unlikely that sons of Sheshan only should mean "grandsons." The genealogy now proceeds through Sheshan's daughter, name not given (unless possibly Ahlai), married to his Egyptian servant Jarha, down to (ver. 41) Elishama, at the twentieth generation from Jerahmeel. To this, however, the Septuagint (*Juxta Exemplar Originale Vaticanum*, of 1637), adds one generation more, καὶ Ἐλισαῦρος ἐγένεντο τῷ Ἰσμαήλ. The Egyptian servant Jarha is not heard of elsewhere; that he was enfranchised before his marriage with Sheshan's daughter is likely enough (Deut. xxii. 8; 1 Sam. xxxi. 11). The language of the end of ver. 33. These were the sons of Jerahmeel, would seem to exclude the following thirteen descendants of Jarha and Sheshan's daughter from the genealogy. Yet this is scarcely likely to be the intention, which perhaps was satisfied with simply marking a distinction by the pause.

Ver. 36.—The name *Zabad* throws considerable doubt on the opinion that no one of Jerahmeel's descendants given in this genealogy can be found elsewhere in the Old Testament: for compare again ch. xi. 41.

Ver. 38.—So also compare Azariah with 2 Chron. xxiii. 1. These two names are abundantly interesting here. Zabad, the tenth from Jerahmeel, or fourteenth from the patriarch Judah himself, brings us to the time of David, by exactly the same interval as seven other perfect genealogies, four of these having the very same number of steps, viz. fourteen, two having fifteen, and that of David himself having eleven steps. An analogous and equally interesting correspondence can be traced with the names

Azariah. See the important art "Zabad," Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' and its further remarks as to the evidence of the genealogy in the fact of its twenty-fourth and last name tallying well with the time of Hezekiah, the sixth king after Athaliah (ch. iv. 41).

Vers. 42-49.—These verses are occupied with the resumption of descendants of Caleb—the Caleb apparently of vers. 9 and 18, though, this being so, the last clause in ver. 49, the daughter of Caleb, Achsa, will require accounting for. This statement would lead us to suppose that we were assuredly reading of Caleb the son of Jephunneh; but it cannot be so. The name of Caleb, with the questions gathering round it, will be best considered here. Of the nine times in which it occurs in this chapter, the mere duplicates (of vers. 20, 46, 48) may be at once counted off. The compound "Caleb-ephrathah" of ver. 24 has been already dealt with. Nor need we for the present suppose ver. 50 to have any real meaning inconsistent with its apparent meaning, viz. that Caleb is the name of a grandson (son of Hur) as well as of the grandfather. There remain the occasions of the occurring of the word in vers. 9, 18, 42, 49. 1. The first appearance, then, of the name in this chapter (ver. 9) exhibits it in a form different from that in which it appears the other times in this chapter or elsewhere, viz. as כָּלֵב, instead of כָּלָב (or once as a patronymic, 1 Sam. xxv. 3, כָּלָבָי). The Vulgate follows the Hebrew, but the Septuagint has at once substituted Caleb. The Syriac Version has Salchi, and the Arabic Sachli, both of them, no doubt, mere transcribers' errors through the mistake of a letter. This form "Chelubai" is, then, an Ἀπαξ λεγόμενον, and no different account has yet been given of the name appearing thus on this one occasion. It may be described, with Lange ('Comm. Old Testament,' *in loc.*), as "adjectivus gentilis" to כָּלָב, which word, however, occurs where it will, is never treated as a synonym with Caleb except by the Septuagint, and then but once (ch. iv. 11), making Lange's further claim of three forms for the name of Caleb wrong. The name might be translated the "Cheluban" or "Chelubite." 2. The Caleb called here first "Chelubai," again "Caleb the son of Hezron," and now "Caleb the brother of Jerahmeel" some, and Keil among them, have endeavoured to identify with Caleb the son of Jephunneh. This latter is a well-known figure in history. He, together with Joshua, was among those who, departing from Egypt, were pursued of Pharaoh, and of all the host those two alone lived to enter into the promised land. This is enough to give him distinction and a prominent

place before the eye. To this Caleb unmistakable reference is made in twenty-eight passages, in sixteen of which he is called "son of Jephunneh," and in three of those sixteen "son of Jephunneh the Kenazite." Now, he tells us himself (Josh. xiv. 7) that he was forty years old in the second year after the Exodus. But it seems (Gen. xlvi. 12, 26) that Hezron, grandson of Judah, and the father of the Caleb of this chapter, was, however young, one of those who went down into Egypt with Jacob, at a date, according to any chronology, which must render it impossible for any son of his to have been alive and only forty years of age at the time of the Exodus. This being so, either the statement already referred to, found at the close of ver. 49, that "the daughter of Caleb was Achsa," must be an interpolation from some ignorant transcriber's marginal annotation, or, unlikely as it is, Caleb the son of Hezron and Caleb the son of Jephunneh both named a daughter Achsa. It is, moreover, likely enough that the frequent describing of Caleb the son of Jephunneh in this style was occasioned by the desire to distinguish him from some other Caleb, *not* a contemporary, indeed, but already well known in a generation preceding but not too remote. Other considerations decidedly concur with this view: *e.g.* Ram is *brother* of Caleb the son of Hezron; he has a grandson, Nahshon, of great distinction, "a prince of the children of Judah," whose sister Aaron married: he was the elect of the Judah tribe to assist Moses and Aaron in the first numbering of the people (Numb. i. 7). Great prominence is given to him (Numb. vii. 12; x. 14). He was clearly (Matt. i. 4; Luke iii. 32) fifth in descent from Judah, in perfect agreement with the table of this chapter. Now, it was this *grandson* of the *elder* brother of Caleb who was contemporary with Caleb the son of Jephunneh. Similarly, the Bezaleel of this chapter (ver. 20), a great-grandson of Caleb the Hezronite, is spoken of (Exod. xxxi. 1; xxxv. 30) at the same date exactly at which Caleb the son of Jephunneh says he was still but forty years of age! 3. The identity of the Caleb of ver. 50, son of Hur, with Caleb the son of Jephunneh is supposed by some, but is not clear. It appears to be asserted, without explanation, in the arts, "Caleb" and "Ephrath," signed A. C. H., Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' though in the second part of the latter article it is alluded to as only possible. On the other hand, it may rather be that Caleb the son of Jephunneh, instead of being identical with this Caleb the son of Hur, is so called in order to distinguish him from this latter as a contemporary. Again, it has been happily conjectured

(‘Speaker’s Commentary,’ *in loc.*) that just as ver. 33 closes the table of Jerahmeel with “These were the sons of Jerahmeel,” so ver. 49 should close the table of Caleb (ver. 42) with the words, These were the sons of Caleb. With a slight alteration, ver. 50 would then begin The sons of Hur, etc. This is, however, only conjecture. Ver. 42, then, must be considered to give us another family of Caleb, *i.e.* a family by another wife, of name not given, just possibly the Jerioth unaccounted for in ver. 18. The first statement lands us in perplexity. Mesha (*מֵשָׁה*) is the firstborn (*i.e.* by the wife or woman in question), and the founder of Ziph. And amid some omission or corruption of text, we are then confronted with the words, and the sons of Mareshah (*מֵרֶשָׁה*) the father (or again, perhaps, *founder*) of Hebron. The reading of the Septuagint gives Mareshah in *both* of these passages, and may come from a Hebrew text that we have not. The substitution could, however, scarcely be accounted for as a mere clerical error, considering both the omission of a *resh* and the replacing of an *he* with an *ayin*. The sentence refutes at present any treatment except the unsatisfactory one of pure conjecture. But employing this, it may be noted that the omitting of the words, “the sons of,” before Mareshah would most help to clear the verse of confusion. In this and following verses, Ziph, Hebron, ‘Apuah, Jorkoam, and Beth-zur, are all names of places certainly, whether or not they are all of persons.

Vers. 46—49 give the names (the first of which appears as that of a man also, next verse and ch. i. 33) of two additional concubines of Caleb, and of their descendants.

Ver. 47 offers us another name, Jahdai, not to be accounted for with any certainty. It is not linked to the context, and nothing is known of the six sons assigned to the person owning it. That Gazez occurs twice in the previous verse is remarkable, and suggestive, possibly, of mistake. The Septuagint omits altogether the clause in which it is found the second time. Houbigant translates, “Porro Haran genuit Jahdai,” and so summarily removes the difficulty from his way (Barrington’s ‘Genealogies,’ i. 210). Hiller (‘Onomasticon,’ S.) would make it the same name as Moza, but without any pretence of argument. A more reasonable suggestion than this might be that Jahdai is the name of yet another concubine of Caleb (Lange, ‘O.T. Comm.,’ *in loc.*).

Ver. 49.—Machbenah is an ἄπαξ λεγόμενον (for Madmannah and Gibea, Josh. xv. 31, 57). The last sentence of this verse is treated above.

Vers. 50—55.—The opening sentence of

these verses has also been already discussed. It may be now added (see Keil, ‘Commentary,’ *in loc.*) that some would understand the words as though they meant, These were the sons of Caleb, *in the descending line of Hur, Ephratah’s firstborn.* This rendering is got at by altering “the son of Hur” into “the sons of Hur,” which seems to have been the reading of the Septuagint manuscripts, and which, at all events, their rendering has. The remainder of ver. 50, with the following four, give three sons of Caleb: 1. Shobal, prince of Kirjath-jearim (city of woods; Josh. ix. 17; xviii. 15; xv. 9, 60; cf. xviii. 14), on the border-land of Judah and Benjamin, and about ten miles from Jerusalem on the road to Emmaus (*Nicopolis*). It is to be identified, almost with certainty, with the modern Kurict-el-Enab. Other references of exceeding interest are 1 Sam. vi. 21; vii. 2; 2 Sam. vi. 5; Ezra ii. 25; Neh. vii. 29; ch. xiii. 6; 2 Chron. i. 4; Jer. xxvi. 20; Ps. cxxxii. 6. This Shobal (ver. 52) had two sons, Haroeh, *i.e.* Reiah (ch. iv. 5), and the progenitor, whatever his name, of half of the people called Manahethites (Authorized Version)—a form probably suggested by the Masoretic pointing of ver. 54—or *Chatsi-hammenoth* (Hebrew text), which Gesenius treats as a proper name, and which means “the midst of quiet places” (Ps. xxiii. 2), from which comes the patronymic of the next verse but one (Barrington, ‘Genealogies,’ i. 213). From the Kirjath-jearim family were derived (ver. 53), the Ithrites, Puhites, Shumathites, and Mishraites, of none of whom, except probably the Ithrites (2 Sam. xxiii. 38; ch. xi. 40), do we find other mention; and from the Mishraites again were derived two offshoots, the Zareathites and Eshtauilites, the towns of both of whom are with great probability to be tracked (Josh. xv. 33; xix. 41; Judg. xiii. 25; xviii. 2). They were situated in that part of Judah called the “low” country, or the Shefelah, stretching from Joppa to Gaza on the Mediterranean. 2. Salma, prince of Bethlehem. The so-called “sons” here attributed to him, six in number, including Bethlehem, evidently betoken families rather than the names of individuals. The town Netophah (Ezra ii. 21; Neh. vii. 26) gave the gentile noun Netophathites (2 Sam. xxiii. 28; Jer. xl. 8). Ataroth, the house of Joab (*i.e.* “crowns” of the house of Joab), is not mentioned elsewhere; but the reason of its being distinguished thus may be due to the fact that there was another Ataroth of Gad (Numb. xxxii. 3, 34), and yet another of *Ephraim* (Josh. xiv. 5; xviii. 13). The Zorites (*צְרִים*) Gesenius thinks to be another gentile form from *צְרִיךְ* with *תְּ*, but of them we do not read elsewhere. Ver. 55 should not have been

separated from the last word of the previous ver.e. The families of the scribes is linked on by the conjunction and (which has coupled the former sons of Salma also two and two) with "the Zorites." This sixth set of descendants from Salma is exhibited to us in the shape of a trio of scribe families, the heads of which will have been, presumably, Tira, Shimea, and Suchah. They are said to have dwelt at Jabez, a place not ascertained; and scarcely to be put into connection with the Jabez of ch. iv. 9. The Vulgate has translated the names of these three families: *Canentes et resonantes et in tabernaculis commorantes;*" and Bertheau advocates the interpretation. These families, it appears, were not purely of Judah; but very interesting it is that, though of the people whose land and possessions were to yield to the descendants of Abraham (Gen. xv. 18-21), yet friendship and intermarriage had found them appa-

rently a lasting place in Judah (Judg. i. 16), while Saul was careful to urge them to save themselves when he was about to smite the Amalekites (1 Sam. xv. 6). Though nothing is known of the link of connection given here in the name Hemath (of which the Vulgate gives the rendering, *Qui venerunt de celo patris*), yet the house of the Rechabites is well known (2 Kings x. 15, 23; Jer. xxxv. 2, 5, 18; and cf. 2 Sam. iv. 2, particularly 3). 3. In ver. 51 *Hareph* (הָרֵף) only here; though *הָרֵף*, found Neh. vii. 24; x. 20; Ezra ii. 18, may possibly be connected with it. There is nothing further said of any people derived from him except that he was father of Beth-gader. The identification of this place is not certain. Gesenius thinks it perhaps the same with Gedorah (Josh. xv. 36), but it is more probably the Gedor of same chapter (fifty-eighth verse), on the road between Hebron and Jerusalem.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1-55.—*The human family.* These verses present a series of family pictures; they remind us that "God setteth the solitary in families" (Ps. lxviii. 6). By thus ordering human life he has provided for the maximum of happiness and of spiritual well-being. We are reminded of—

I. **ITS VARIOUS RELATIONSHIPS.** Here we have husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister. How excellent is God's loving-kindness in thus binding our hearts and lives together in such happy and sacred bonds, refining our souls and multiplying our joys!

II. **ITS VARIOUS DISPOSITIONS.** In some cases we have parents and children complete; in others, parents without children at all (ver. 30); in others, daughters without sons; in others, sons without daughters; in another case a child born after its father's death (ver. 24); in another a servant elevated to a son-in-law (ver. 35). What almost endless varieties there are in the circumstances and relations in which our family life is found!

III. **ITS PRICELESS ADVANTAGE TO OUR RACE.** 1. It is the guardian of a nation's purity; the morals of a people are high or low as it respects or disregards the family bond. 2. It shields young life from the perils by which it would otherwise be corrupted. 3. It calls forth from maturity the best virtues which manhood and womanhood can show. We are thus led to—

IV. **THE DISCIPLINE IT PROVIDES. FOR EACH STAGE OF LIFE.** 1. In childhood it nurtures obedience, submission. 2. In youth, industry, concession. 3. In young manhood, hardihood; in young womanhood, delicacy of feeling. 4. In maturity, patience, self-command, unselfishness, mutual concession, intercessory prayer.

V. **ITS BEARING ON HUMAN PIETY.** We could not have known and trusted and loved God as our heavenly Father, but for human parentage; we could not have learned how to cultivate the right spirit for reception into and acceptance within the kingdom, but for human childhood (Matt. xviii. 2); we could not have known how best to regard our fellows and feel toward them, but for human brotherhood (Matt. xxiii. 8).—C.

Ver. 7.—*A transgressor and troubler.* In most instances in the genealogies of this book, the names of the successive members of the families of Israel are mentioned without remark. But now and then a memorable personage is named, and some trait of his character, some incident in his life, is recorded, or rather referred to, by the chronicler. This is the case even when the record is one of shame and infamy. So it is with Achan.

I. **Achan was a transgressor.** In transgression much is involved: *e.g. Law.* A line must be drawn in order that it may be passed over. A commandment must be given before it can be violated. In the case of Achan, the law was published with authority. *Covetousness.* Before there can be sin there must be lust. Desires are divinely implanted, and evil does not lie in their existence, but in their unlawful gratification. *Temptation.* There must be some circumstance without eliciting and fostering the desire within. Men often blame the temptation, but unreasonably, for the evil is in themselves, not in the innocent and often unconscious occasion of their transgression. *Yielding of the will* when tempted. Without this, all that goes before is harmless; it is here that the harm begins. If temptation is resisted, virtue is strengthened and character is improved; if the will succumb, moral deterioration ensues. The latter was the case with Achan. *Hiding of sin.* This will often follow upon transgression. There is a hope that it may be concealed from men, perhaps even from God. *Conscience of sin.* This is divinely appointed, to lead the sinner to repentance and reformation. Yet it may prove, if it fail in this mission, a scourge to chastise, awakening remorse and fear.

II. **Achan was a Troubler.** The trouble which follows upon sin is not confined to the sinner. In the case before us all Israel was punished because of one man's sin. Such is the constitution of society, that this is often seen, the chastisement of many for the transgression of one. Trouble may lead to inquiry, and inquiry to discovery. This happened in Achan's case by supernatural agency; but the same happens every day by means which appear natural. Discovery may lead to confession, and confession may be followed by punishment. So it was with Achan. And there are cases where there seem to be no means of avoiding the consequences of transgression. Yet the sinner must remember that we have been assured that "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Trouble may be followed by Divine acceptance and favour. There seems something harsh in Joshua's language to Achan, "Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day." Yet, when the transgressor was removed and the transgression was put away from Israel, the Lord received his people again into his favour.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Before transgression, "Be sure your sin will find you out." 2. After transgression, the trouble that comes upon the sinner is sent in mercy. 3. Confession and repentance, and faith in Christ, are necessary in order to reconciliation and acceptance.—T.

Ver. 55.—*The families of the scribes.* These Books of Chronicles may have been the work of Ezra, the prince of scribes. In any case, they bear traces of the handiwork of that profession. As learned men, whose learning was devoted to the exposition of the Law of Moses, they were peculiarly suitable to preserve the records of the theocracy.

I. Observe the **OCCUPATION** of the scribes. It was to study and to expound the sacred books of the nation, to read these writings in public, and to write—probably to write copies of the Law, and commentaries upon its letter and spirit. The civil and sacred Law were alike their theme. All legal and religious documents were entrusted to their care.

II. Remark the **PROFESSIONAL POSITION** of the scribes. The text speaks of "the families of the scribes." Occupations have a tendency to transmit themselves from father to son. Hereditary pursuits are observable in all communities. Traditions and habits are thus maintained and perpetuated. These learned Hebrew families seem to have dwelt in certain fixed places, forming, it may be, colleges of studious, scholarly, literary men.

III. Notice the **GROWTH AND PROGRESS AND HISTORY** of the scribes. As a class they date from the close of the Captivity; and from that time onward they appear to have exercised great and growing influence over the national life and religion. In the time of our Saviour they were evidently a very important class of the community. In their two grades—the lower, the interpreters of the classic Hebrew into the colloquial Aramaic; the higher, the doctors learned in the Pentateuch—they supplied to Israel much of the intellectual and moral element in the national life. Jesus admitted the excellence of their work when he denominated his ministers "scribes instructed unto

the kingdom of heaven ;" he pointed out their defects when he required of his followers a higher righteousness than theirs. And the Evangelists contrast the professional formalism of the Jewish scholars with the freshness and authority of the Great and Divine Teacher.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. A literary profession may be of great service to the cause of religion. Ignorance is a foe to truth. Christianity will be the more appreciated the more it is studied, the more the light of cultivated intellects is brought to bear upon it. 2. A profession devoted to the advancement of religious learning is not without its perils. There is danger lest the form displace the substance, and the letter the spirit. True and fervent piety alone can correct these tendencies and avert these perils.—T.

Ver. 1.—*Jacob—Israel.* Mistake is often made concerning Jacob, and his character and conduct are very imperfectly estimated. He is set in contrast with the open-hearted, impulsive, and generous Esau, to his great disadvantage. But we forget that we are able to estimate Jacob's character more fully because the process of his moral and spiritual training, in the Divine providential leadings, is detailed, and we therefore have so much of his *badness* revealed to us in the process. We do not really know Esau as we know Jacob. The accounts that have reached us concerning him only deal with what appears to be attractive and good, and we see very few indications of the badness which his complete story might bring to light. Jacob is set before us as a man under immediate Divine training, and something like the accomplishment of one great stage of the Divine purpose is indicated in the bestowment of the new name, *Israel*. The meaning of the two names *Jacob*—the supplanter, *Israel*—the prince of God, should be given; and the circumstances connected with the affixing of each name should be recalled. They serve to note the marked features of the two distinct portions of Jacob's life.

L JACOB'S FIRST NAME—THE SUPPLANTER. This declares the infirmity of his natural disposition. It is clear, from the record given in Genesis, that he began life under very serious disabilities, heavily weighted. The doctrine of heredity finds forcible illustration. He inherited his mother's disposition—a tendency to scheme, to outwit others, to take advantage of them, to trip them up, to get one's own good even at the expense of other people's loss; the planning, bargaining, keen-dealing spirit. This inherited evil disposition so influences him that he "entraps his brother, he deceives his father, he makes a bargain even in his prayer; in his dealings with Laban, in his meeting with Esau, he still calculates and contrives; he distrusts his neighbours . . . he repels, even in his lesser traits, the free confidence that we cannot withhold from the patriarchs of the elder generation." What he might have become but for the grace of God is well indicated in Dean Stanley's description of the ordinary Arab sheikh: "In every respect, except that which most concerns us, the likeness is complete between the Bedouin chief of the present day and the Bedouin chief who came from Chaldea nearly four thousand years ago. The more we see the outward conformity of Abraham and his immediate descendants to the *godless, grasping, foul-mouthed Arabs* of the modern desert, nay, even their fellowship in the infirmities of their common state and country, the more we shall recognize the force of the religious faith which has raised them from that low estate to be the heroes and saints of their people." To add to Jacob's natural disabilities, he was the favourite child of his mother, and, for long years, was placed under her influence and the persuasion of her mischievous example. This tended to remove the sense of evil from his scheming and deceiving ways. And circumstances seemed to favour him; his brother's hunger and his father's blindness seemed to be providential openings for carrying out his mother's plan for securing the birthright and the blessing. So often we deceive ourselves with the idea that Providence helps us to do what we, in our mere wilfulness, intend to do. All we can say of Jacob, under his first name, is that there is force of character, if only it can be toned aright; and there is an interest in religious things, a religious thoughtfulness, which gives promise of a true and noble life when he has passed through a long period of trial and sorrow and discipline. With all his infirmities, and with that sad absence of simplicity and uprightness in him, there is yet the making of the good man. And so, even in these first stages, his story carries lessons of hopefulness to those

who feel deeply the natural infirmity of their characters, or have to do with the training of young people who are heavily weighted with inherited infirmities.

II. JACOB'S SECOND NAME—THE PRINCE OF GOD. This declares the possible triumph of Divine grace over natural infirmity. We must connect it, not with the incident of meeting Esau only, but with Jacob's whole life. It seals the Divine training, and affirms Jacob's conversion from the self-willed and self-seeking spirit. "Jacob has gone through a long training and chastening from the God of his fathers, to whose care and guidance he had given himself (at Bethel); he suffers heavily, but he learns from that he suffered." Trace the stages of the Divine dealing. The force of the scene of Mahanaim in completing the Divine work is suggestively given by F. W. Robertson: "His name was changed from Jacob to Israel, because himself was an altered man. Hitherto there had been something subtle in his character—a certain cunning and craft—a want of breadth, as if he had no firm footing upon reality. Jacob was tender and devout and grateful for God's pardon, and only half honest still. But this half-insincere man is brought into contact with the awful God, and his subtlety falls from him—he becomes real at once. No longer Jacob—the supplanter, but Israel—the prince of God . . . a larger, more unselfish name—a larger and more unselfish man—honest and true at last." This, then, becomes the great and searching question for us all: not, "What are we in our inherited tendencies and natural dispositions?" but, "What are we now, and what are we becoming, in all holy triumph over inward infirmities and outward foes, through yielding ourselves fully to the leadings and teachings and sanctifying of Divine grace?" "And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*Divine judgment on individual sin.* Very little is known of Er. The account in Genesis (xxxviii. 7) is as brief as that given in the Chronicles. Yet it sets clearly before us a case of early death, probably a sudden and violent death, and it declares to us that, in this particular instance, the death, and the manner of the death, were immediate judgments on personal transgression. There is a strong tendency to assume individual sin as the cause of calamities and so-called accidents, but our Lord taught us that we cannot always, or necessarily, trace such a connection. It may be so, but it may not be so; and we, in Christian charity, had better leave the discovery of the connection in God's own hands (see Luke xiii. 1-5). Still, we should be ready to learn the lessons which God may design to teach us, when he is pleased to give us illustrative cases in his Word. Oftentimes we find the Divine recognition and judgment of social and national sins illustrated. The old divine bids us remember that "God can only punish nations, as such, in this world; he can punish individuals in this world and the next." Israel is, as a nation, the subject of frequent Divine judgments, and Israel is bidden observe how Divine judgments fall on the guilty nations around her. But as this feature of the Divine dealings is set forth so prominently and so constantly, there is some danger of our assuming that Divine judgments, as executed here on earth, do not concern the individual; and that God may be said directly to govern the *race*, but not the man. Such a delusion would tend to nourish human wilfulness and pride, and still more completely separate men from God; and, therefore, we have men's personal sins, and the immediate Divine judgment on those sins, impressively narrated.

I. ER'S SIN WAS SOME PERSONAL ACT OF WRONG-DOING. Exactly what it was we are not told, but we know the ways in which men nowadays transgress God's laws and insult the Divine honour. There are acts of wilful disobedience and rebellion, acts of bodily self-indulgence, and acts of violence and cruelty toward others. We have to see that this evil of Er's was distinctly *personal*. He did not merely share in the errors, or follies, or sins of his age, in a blind and heedless way; he made wicked ways for himself, and wrought evil in his own wilfulness. Therefore the Divine observation rested upon him as a man who strove to set himself against God.

II. ER'S SIN REVEALED A HOPELESSLY CORRUPTED NATURE. It was such a fruitage as could only come out of a corrupt tree. Distinguish between the one sin into which man may be tempted; even the good man may be "drawn aside and enticed." "overtaken in a fault;" and the continuing in sin, which indicates the love for it, and the de-

riorating influence it has exerted on mind and heart. A time may come for the man (as Er), or for the nation (as Sodom), when remedial agencies cease to be of avail, and then they can but be "cut down." Illustrate from Pharaoh, with the hardened heart, from King Saul, and from the expression used in Hosca (iv. 17), "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone."

III. ER'S SIN BROUGHT UPON HIMSELF DIVINE JUDGMENT. This is briefly but forcibly intimated in the words, "and he slew him." His early and sudden and violent death, was no disease and no accident. It was direct Divine judgment. God deals with the *individual* exactly as with the hopelessly corrupted world and the utterly degraded Sodom. Life on earth is forfeited if it is so shamefully abused. Discuss the question how far we may recognize calamities reaching individuals as Divine judgment on their personal transgressions. In every age there are open and notorious cases, e.g. Ananias and Sapphira. We may say that it is quite possible for any accident to be a judgment; but it may be a judgment on a bad system, and the sufferer may not be the direct cause. Impress God's constant inspection of individual conduct and character.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*Sinners are troublers.* *Achan* is but a modernized form of the familiar *Achan* (Josh. vii. 25). The story of this man is given so fully in the early records, and is here so definitely recalled, that we may be sure some important and permanent lessons were taught by it, and it may be still for "our instruction, on whom the ends of the world are come." The narrative should be fully detailed. Bring out that Achan's sin was at once *self-will*, *disobedience*, *covetousness*, and *sacrilege*. Explain that the one condition of Divine blessing for Israel was entire and unquestioning loyalty to the Divine will. And there is no other condition of blessing now. That will might oppose seemingly *right* feelings; and this brings us the more subtle and anxious testings of our loyalty, e.g. Abraham's offering Isaac. That will would necessarily oppose all covetous feeling. The man who wants to get for *self* will ever find it hard to accept God's will and way for him. But the covetous man who is a member of a community not only brings trouble on himself, but on others who may be related to him.

I. THIS SINNER'S SIN. Set out its public character, in view of Joshua's public proclamation. Show its aggravations, as committed directly against the known will of God.

II. THIS SINNER'S SIN BROUGHT TROUBLE ON HIMSELF. As sin always must do. Here the sorrow of feeling himself to be the cause of national disaster; the penalty of his own forfeited life; and the misery of knowing that his family must suffer for his sin, and his very name be blotted out of the national records. As is ever the case with the covetous, Achan might glory over what he had *gained*, until it could be revealed to him what he had *lost*; then the gain could only appear to be utterly worthless and hopelessly ruinous, a millstone hung round his neck to drown him in the sea. Compare what Judas Iscariot gained—thirty pieces of silver; and what he lost—life and hope and Christ,—his all. But the point which is specially called up to our remembrance is that—

III. THIS SINNER'S SIN BROUGHT TROUBLE ON OTHERS. So he is known as the "troubler of Israel." Set out the trouble that came upon *Israel*. They were grievously smitten before their foes. Also the trouble that came upon *Joshua*. He was humbled in the dust, filled with fears, and driven to God in agonizing intercessions. But even more terribly Achan's sin brought trouble upon his own family, just as the drunkard and the licentious and the dishonest now drag down into their ruin those they profess to love. "Not Achan alone is called forth to death, but *all his family, all his substance*. The actor alone does not smart with sacrilege; all that concerns him is enwrapped in the judgment. God's first revenges are so much the more fearful because they must be exemplary." On the penalty of a man's wrong-doing covering and including those related to him, Archbishop Whitgift has this figure: "The eagle that stole a coal from the altar thereby set her nest on fire, which consumed both her young eagles and herself that stole it." We recognize that, if men are linked together in family and social life, it is well that, in God's providence, they should bear one another's burdens, share one another's disabilities, and suffer one another's woes. In such a case as Achan's we have but God doing, by direct command, what he is always doing in the

orderings of Divine providence. No man's sin can ever stand alone—it must involve others in its consequences; and in this its hatefulness is revealed and a due fear of it is wrought in our minds. We should not so much hesitate to sin if we could ensure the limitation of the consequences to ourselves. But our sin must make us *troublers*. Even if the sin be forgiven, the issues must still go on. Then what a sublime idea we may gain of the redemption which God proposes! It deals with us for forgiveness and cleansing, but it also goes on after all the issues of human sin, and will not rest until the whole world is fully delivered, recovered, and saved.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—Lessons from the story of Boaz. The Book of Ruth is preserved to us as a picture of family and social life in the disorderly times of the judges. Both Ruth and Naomi have been made the frequent subject of public teaching; but Boaz stands out with sufficient prominence in the narrative to justify our fixing attention on him. Give the story, and especially the gleaning customs of those olden times; the kindly relations of masters and labourers; the customs of seeking protection from the family *goel*, or avenger; of confirming covenants by the gift of a shoe; and of conducting matters of business in the open space within the city gates. Fully explain the Eastern law of the *goel*. We may find illustrated in the conduct of Boaz—

I. THE CONSIDERATENESS OF THE TRUE GENTLEMAN. See his gentle and considerate treatment of the poor gleaner, and his gentle dealing with her when she claimed his protection. The essence of the Christian gentleman is considerateness for the feelings and wishes of others, and a gentle way of doing all things, even hard and painful things. Find beautiful illustrations in the tender considerateness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and compare Paul's address to the elders at Miletus, and the tone of the Epistle to the Philippians.

II. THE RESPONSIVENESS TO ANOTHER'S TRUST. It is always the mark of the good man that he loves to be trusted, and readily responds to trust. So Boaz did when Ruth put herself under his protection. The Lord Jesus always looked for *faith*—*trust*; and opened his best treasures for the opened, trusting heart.

III. THE LOYALTY TO THE SENSE OF DUTY. Shown in his taking up Ruth's case at once, and earnestly, and making himself liable for all that was involved in the vindication of her rights. Then work out how Divine benedictions ever follow right character and conduct. Ruth and Boaz both get their reward. The "right" may not always disclose its issues at once. They often seem painfully delayed, but, if we follow on, right is sure to lead to practical blessing. *Right* never yet led *wrong*; and *good* never yet finally issued in *evil*.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—The character of Jesse. Biographies usually make much of the parental connections and ancestral relations of their hero. It is even discussed whether the special *genius* of a person is to be traced to his father or to his mother. In the earlier Scriptures the mother's name and character are seldom given (exceptions may be found in the cases of Sarah, Rebekah, and Hannah); but in the time of the later kings the mother's name is preserved with care. The importance of hereditary connections may concern both the intellectual forces of the mind and the moral qualities making up the character. There is the heritage of *goodness* as well as of greatness; and, therefore, St. Paul thanks God that Timothy stands in the third generation of marked faith and piety (2 Tim. i. 5). Almost nothing is known of the mother of David, and the absence of information has led to strange conjecture; Dean Stanley curiously suggesting that she may have been previously a wife or concubine of one Nahash, possibly an Ammonite king, who under some circumstances not detailed became a second wife of Jesse, and by him the mother of David. All that the narrative suggests is that David was much younger than his brothers, and the child of Jesse's old age. He is introduced to us as conversing with Samuel on the occasion of the anointing of David (1 Sam. xvi.); as caring for the wants of his children while they were away from home in the army of Saul (1 Sam. xvii.); and as the object of David's special care when the personal enmity of Saul put his relatives, as well as David himself, in peril (1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4). The incident in which the personal character of Jesse is most fully indicated is that of sending David with a present to his sons in the army; and this suggests that he was a thoughtful and affectionate father,

and permits us to trace something of David's remarkable *family affection* to his paternity. He may therefore serve to introduce the subject of paternal relationships and duties, and the rewards which those may find in the career and virtue of their children who have not been themselves remarkable for anything save for being *good fathers*. The Divine recognition of faithfulness in this precise office and relation is indicated in God's commendation of Abraham (Gen. xviii. 19), "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord."

I. FATHERLY LOVE FINDS FITTING EXPRESSION IN WISE RULE AND RESTRAINTS. Jesse seems to have had such authority. His sons, though of full age, promptly come and go at his bidding. He appears to have had his household fully under control, appointing each member his place and work. The well-being of families depends on the firmness of the father's rule. The first conceptions of right, and of the duties of submission and obedience, happily come to us associated with our reverence for, and affection for, our father. And worthy fulfilment, in this respect, of the paternal duties carries to our children worthy ideas of the righteousness and love of "our Father who is in heaven."

II. FATHERLY LOVE CAN MAKE HIGH SACRIFICES. Illustrated in Jesse's sending his sons to the army in the time of national peril. How much he felt their danger is seen in his anxiety to know of their welfare while on the battle-field. Such sacrifices have often been required of parents in times of national danger, and similar sacrifices in quieter spheres, especially in devoting sons to missionary work. Show that to the true parent such sacrifices are made with mingled feelings of *joy* and *sorrow*.

III. FATHERLY LOVE FINDS ITS REWARD IN THE CHILDREN'S CARE; as Jesse's life was saved by David when Saul's enmity put the family in peril. Loving children have no greater joy than that of caring for and tending their aged parents who have toiled and suffered so much and so long for them. See our Lord's care of his mother from his cross.—R. T.

Ver. 20.—Artistic gifts finding religious spheres. (For the earlier references to Bezaleel, see Exod. xxxi. 2; xxxv. 30; xxxvi. 1, 2; xxxvii. 1.) Explain the precise endowment of this man and his companion, and the assertion of his call by God, who specially "filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." It has been said that "their work was to be only that of handcraftsmen. Everything that they had to do was prescribed in strict and precise detail. There was to be no exercise for their original powers of invention nor for their taste." But this appears to be a needless limitation of their mission, especially as we are told that they were called to "devise cunning works, to work in gold," etc.; and, however minute patterns of artistic work may be, even this worthy *carrying out* makes demand on artistic faculty and taste. We are rather disposed to give Bezaleel credit for designing much of the ornamentation, and elaborating the details of a general sketch furnished by Moses. It is curious to note that, in a mistaken apprehension of the commandment (Exod. xx. 4), the Jews would not cultivate either the arts of painting or sculpture. This may have been a safeguard to them under the temptations of surrounding idolatry, but it seriously limited their culture as a nation, and possibly made their idolatrous love of images and aesthetic worship the more intense when once the barriers were broken down. The Divine call and endowments of Bezaleel are the Divine protest against the neglect of those artistic faculties which are an essential part of man's composite nature, as God has been pleased to create it. These faculties have their own place, their right place; and it is at the peril of an imperfect and one-sided culture that we, on the one hand, neglect them, and, on the other hand, push them into an exaggerated place.

I. THE MISSION OF THE ARTS IN HUMAN LIFE. Take illustrations from the arts of painting, sculpture, music, and poetry, and show how they bear on the *refinement* of human life. Each holds out an ideal standard of purity and beauty, and seeking for absolute grace of *form* materially aids in securing real goodness and purity and truth. Illustrate by the influence of works of art in our homes as aids to the culture of family life. They also bear directly upon the *pleasure* of human life. For most of us the days must be spent in dull, grinding toil, which wears out the brightness and

romance of our spirits. Our real world is hard and depressing. It is of the utmost concern to us that we may pass into an ideal world created by the imagination, and find pleasure in its winsome and joyous scenes. The arts take us into another world, and bring to the earth-toilers the pleasures of a paradise. Evidently true of music and poetry, really true of all.

II. THE MISSION OF THE ARTS IN RELIGIOUS LIFE. Strangely in this sphere we still dread their influence. Yet the decorations of even the tabernacle and temple reproach us, and much more David's elaborate efforts to secure the "beautiful" and the "pleasing" in the temple-worship. Explain that the arts serve in religion the one great end of keeping the *ideal* and the *ideally perfect* ever before us, and so they become a perpetual uplifting inspiration, surrounding us ever with the symbols and the suggestions of the Divine and eternal. They are for us the "figures of the true."

III. THE NECESSARY LIMITATION OF THE ARTISTIC IN THE HIGHER AND RELIGIOUS SPHERES. The creations of art must never be sought for themselves, or they become virtual *idols*. They may only be symbols of realities, and handmaids to truths. As a practical conclusion, it may be shown that a man is not responsible for other gifts than those with which he is personally entrusted, but he is bound to be fully loyal to God in the use of those he has. Sooner or later in life, every man who wants to be faithful will *discover his faculty and find his sphere*.—R. T.

Vers. 22, 23.—*The prowess of Jair*. The story of this man is given in Numb. xxxii. 41; Deut. iii. 14; Josh. xiii. 30. From the repeated mention of him we may assume that he was a remarkable man for military genius, and was in so large a degree successful in his warlike enterprises as to stand out before the ages as a prominent example of the warlike endowment, and its place in the Divine purposes. The brief notice of this man suggests for our consideration—*The consecration to God of the military talent*. We cannot accept fully the facts of human history without recognizing the Divine gift of the genius of the warrior. Different views are held on the righteousness of war. From the Christian standpoint all *offensive* war must be at once and entirely condemned, but *defensive* war—and aid to those called to *defensive* war—appears to be fully consistent with Christian principles. Still, we shall unfeignedly rejoice when the principle of arbitration can be universally adopted, and the "nations learn war no more." It is, even in its best forms, a terrible human scourge and evil. But, whatever our view of it may be, history keeps her testimony, and declares that, in the long story of our race, *war* has been one of the important agencies used by God, and overruled by him, to the accomplishment of his gracious ends; and that he has, again and again, raised up men who had "war" for their life-mission, and the military endowment as their precise trust. There have been the Joshuas, the Davids, the Maccabees, the Marlboroughs, and the Wellingtons, etc. Times and circumstances have made war the only possible agency for the punishing of wrong and the deliverance and confirmation of the right. Still, we should distinctly observe that warfare is the creation of man's lust of power and dominion, his ambition to be supreme; and that the "God of peace" does but—if we may so say—fit, temporarily, into the circumstances thus created, until he can get fully established his kingdom of righteousness in which war will be unknown.

I. THE DISTINCTIVE MILITARY GIFT. It is the *gift of command over other men* finding one particular mode of expression. This is the essence of it, but it is combined with the *constructive* faculty, the *power of organization, courage, bodily skill, quickness of invention*, etc.—all, it may be pointed out, endowments which may find other spheres than battle-fields. Illustrate by the devotion of F. W. Robertson's soldierly gifts to the service of the Church, and by the gift of ruling men found in the heads of large mills and factories.

II. THE LOYALTY THAT GUIDES THE USE OF THE MILITARY GIFTS. It is characteristic of the soldier that he is loyal to his king, and this loyalty finds expression in instant and unquestioning obedience. So the soldier among us is a plea urging us to maintain similar relations to our Lord, who is the "King of kings." So far as we can see, it would be a loss to the moral health of a nation if the example of soldierly loyalty and obedience were removed. St. Paul was essentially a loyal soldier. When

a command came from his Lord, he tells us, "Immediately we conferred not with flesh and blood."

III. THE WITNESS TO VIRTUE AND DUTY THAT IS MADE BY MILITARY MEN. Lord Nelson's words embody the witness all soldiers make. We must work for, suffer for, and, if need be, die for, *duty*. "England expects that every man will do his *duty*." And in this time-serving, self-seeking, money-getting age we cannot afford to lose any agency which renders public witness to the fact that there is something nobler than even *life*—it is *duty*. If it could be so that, in the world of the future, the military genius was no longer needed, still even a world *at peace* would need the story of the heroic ages, and its witness to the dignity of endurance, obedience, promptitude, sacrifice for a high idea, and above all to the paramount claims of *duty*.—R. T.

Ver. 55.—*The mission of the Kenites.* This people is first mentioned in Gen. xv. 19. They were a nomadic tribe, and their principal seat seems to have been the rocky tracts in the south and south-west of Palestine, near the Amalekites (see Numb. xiv. 21, 22). Jethro was a Kenite. Jael was wife of Heber the Kenite. Saul spared them in his expedition against the Amalekites (1 Sam. xv. 6). David maintained friendly relations with them (1 Sam. xxx. 29). The house of the Rechabites belonged to this tribe. The friendly feeling between the two tribes, based on the conduct of the Kenites at the time of the Exodus (Exod. xviii. 10-19; Numb. x. 29-32), led to their intermixture and almost amalgamation with the Israelites—Kenite families not only dwelling among them, but being actually regarded as of one blood. Their semi-monastic austerity is their chief feature. They preserved their nomadic life and customs even when dwelling in the midst of the cities of Israel. Dean Stanley thus pictures a colony of them, that of Heber, the husband of Jael: "Between Hazor, the capital of Jabin, and Kedesh-Naphtali, birthplace of Barak—each within a day's journey of the other—lies, raised high above the plain of Merom, amongst the hills of Naphtali, a green plain. This plain is still and was then studded with massive terebinths. Underneath the spreading branches of one of them there dwelt, unlike the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, a settlement of Bedouins, living, as if in the desert, with their tents pitched and their camels and asses around them, whence the spot had acquired the name of 'The Terebinth,' or 'Oak,' of the 'Unloading of Tents.'" It is from this peculiarity of the Kenites that we learn their mission.

I. THEIR NOMADIC LIFE REMINDED ISRAEL OF GOD'S MERCIES. For they had once been what the Kenites then were—a mere tribe or aggregation of tribes. But God had, in a most glorious and gracious way, made them a nation, and given them a land. Such a reminder brought home to them the claims of Jehovah, and should have renewed their devotion and allegiance to him. Compare the witness made by the hermits in the times of the early Church.

II. THEIR STRICT OBEDIENCE TO RULE REPROACHED ISRAEL FOR THE NEGLECT OF THE COVENANT. They were loyal to the customs and rules of their founder, whatever disabilities such loyalty might seem to entail. Illustrate by the story of testing the Rechabites with the offer of wine, given in Jer. xxxv. Impress that we need still the witness of virtue and excellence in those who are not with us; who are among us, but not of our party. And in this we may see some good in the association together in one nation of differing religious sects. Each may teach the others some valuable lessons, and find effective expression of some essential virtue. Our Lord, in his teachings, even ventured to draw lessons from the quick-witted example of the *bad* man. We may learn something of God and *duty* from all those with whom we are brought into even casual contact.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

Vers. 1-9.—The whole of this chapter is occupied with the descendants of David: the first nine verses of it with his own sons, classified according to the place of their

birth, Hebron or Jerusalem; the remaining verses with the line of kings of his house to Jeconiah and Zedekiah (ver. 16), the grandsons of Zerubbabel (ver. 21), and descendants of Shechaniah (ver. 24). To the seven years and six months (2 Sam. ii. 11)

of David's reign at Hebron six sons belong, each of a different mother. To the thirty and three years (2 Sam. v. 5; 1 Kings ii. 11) of his reign at Jerusalem belong other thirteen sons, viz. four of one mother, Bethshua, and nine of other mothers, whose names are not given. The list of the six Hebron sons, with their mothers, is nearly identical with that of 2 Sam. iii. 2-5, although the differences, slight as they are, would of the two indicate our list here rather as *not* copied than copied thence. The only noticeable difference, however, is in the name of the second son, announced here as Daniel, instead of Chileab, while the Septuagint has *Δαλούτα*. This, together with the circumstance that one word would, as regards the Hebrew characters, comparatively easily convert into the other, renders it probable that it is merely a corrupt text or text obscure at this point which has occasioned the difference. The meaning of the name Daniel, put side by side with what we read in 1 Sam. xxiv. 15, xxv. 39, suggests strongly that it is the right name of the two. It was a name likely to be given by David to his first child by Abigail. Additional suspicion is thrown on the name Chileab through the three last letters of it, "leab," constituting also the three first of the very next word, "*of* Abigail" (בְּרִיאַל) which looks very much like the over-haste of the pen uncorrected. It is remarkable that the Syriac and Arabic versions translate "Caleb," both here and in the parallel passage. For the sons born in Jerusalem we have all three parallel lists at command, and the variations are rather greater. The other two lists are in 2 Sam. v. 14-16; ch. xiv. 4-7. The first of these omits Elihelet and Nogal (possibly they died young or without issue), and the latter calls Elihelet *Elpalel* (אֵלְפָלֵל). Again, Shimeah and Elishama in our passage must yield, overruled by the consent of the other two, to Shammuel and Elishua. Again, it is to be noticed that the name Eliada (God (יְהָוָה) knoweth), on occasion of its *latest* occurrence (ch. xiv. 7), appears as *Beeliada* (the Lord (יְהָוָה) knoweth), preserving therein probably its *earlier form*, viz. that used before a settled bad sense had come to be attached to the word Baal (see 'Speaker's Commentary,' *in loc.*).

Numb. xiii. 12; 2 Sam. ix. 4, 5; xvii. 27; ch. xxvi. 5. The component parts of both words are the same, but their order is different—the meaning of the one perhaps “the people of God;” of the other, “the God of the people.”

Ver. 9.—This verse plainly adds concubines, perhaps the ten spoken of in 2 Sam. xv. 16, to the number of the mothers of the foregoing sons. The mention of only one daughter of David, viz. Tamar, follows the manifest ordinary rule, that daughters are not recorded at all, except for one of two reasons—either that through a daughter the line was saved, or that the daughter had from some special reason made a place for herself in history.

Vers. 10-16.—The line of royal descent from David, is now rapidly carried down in these verses—*first*, as far as good King Josiah, sixteen generations in all (omitting, quite consistently, Athalia, who reigned by her own usurpation for six years on the death of her son Azariah); and then, by four successions (viz. two brothers, sons of Josiah, and a grandson and great-grandson of Josiah), to the Captivity.

Ver. 10.—Though the Authorized Version has *Abia* the Hebrew word is אַבִּיא both here and in 2 Chron. xiii. 1, 23 (or Authorized Version, xiv. 1), in both of which passages, as also elsewhere, our Authorized Version has *Abijah*. Another form is *Abijam* (אַבִּיאָם), as in 1 Kings xiv. 31 and elsewhere. A corrupt form (אַבְּרִיאָם) is found in 2 Chron. xiii. 20. We have the name in the New Testament genealogy (Matt. i. 7, 8).

Ver. 11.—**Ahaziah.** This name is found as Azariah in 2 Chron. xxii. 6; and, by a shifting of the derivative part of the word, as Jehoahaz in 2 Chron. xxi. 17; thus, **אֶחָזְיָה** or **יְהֹאָזֵן**.

Ver. 12.—Azariah. This name is found in 2 Chron. xxvi. 1; xxvii. 2, as Uzziah; but in the Second Book of Kings it is found sometimes as Uzziah and sometimes as Azariah in the very same chapter (cf. 2 Kings xv. 13 and 17, 23 and 32, and see Genius, 'Lexicon,' *sub voce*). We have the name as Azariah in Matt. 1. 8, 9.

Ver. 15.—The first thing to be observed in this verse is that, though it lays stress on the mention of the name of Josiah's first-born of four sons as Jochanan, this is the only mention of him. Some, however, have taken the Jehoshaz of 2 Kings xxiii. 30 for him. Next, that Jehoiakim was not the original name of the next brother, but a name slightly altered by Pharaoh-Necho from Eliakim (2 Kings xxiii. 34). If the dates of 2 Kings xxiii. 31, 34, 36, be correct, there is no doubt that, though Jehoiakim, i.e., Eliakim, reigned after Jechoniah, yet he

was the elder, and is in his right place in the present passage. Next, that Shallum (Jer. xx. 11) is another name of the Jehoahaz of 2 Kings xxiii. 30, 31, 34, and several other places. It is possible that he finds the last place amid the four brothers of this verse because of his probable usurpation of the throne, in violation of the right of his elder brother, Jehoiakim, and the early fall he met with in consequence. Lastly, that the fourth brother, Zedekiah, whose name (2 Kings xxiv. 17) was originally Matthaniah, was put on the throne by the King of Babylon, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem (2 Kings xxiv. 18) after that his nephew Jehoiachin (who could have no son old enough to succeed) was (2 Kings xxiv. 12, 15, 17) carried captive to Babylon.

Ver. 16.—Of the above four brothers, sons of Josiah, the second, Jehoiakim, or Eliakim, had a son called Jeconiah, or Jehoiachin—essentially the same word. He was eighteen years of age when he succeeded his father (2 Kings xxiv. 8). A touching glimpse is given of him in Jer. iii. 31. His name is shortened to Coniah in Jer. xxii. 24 and xxxvii. 1, though elsewhere in the same prophet, Jeconiah, and in one place (Jer. iii. 31), Jehoiachin. The name of Zedekiah occasions difficulty in this verse. In the first instance, following the examples of vers. 10—14, we should presume that this Zedekiah is set forth as a son of Jeconiah, and as it is not said that he *reigned* after Jeconiah (for it was undoubtedly Jeconiah's uncle Zedekiah who reigned after him), we need only have read it as a statement of one of his sons. Against this, however, there are two tolerably decisive considerations; for, first, the verse opens confessedly by offering us sons of Jehoiakim, and these two, Jeconiah and Zedekiah, will fulfil the promise of that plural; and again, the seventeenth verse enters upon the formal enumeration of sons to Jeconiah. The question, therefore, returns—Who was this Zedekiah, son of Jehoiakim? Some consider him identical with the Zedekiah of the previous verse, and that "his son" means here "his successor." This undoes fewer difficulties than it makes. If the text be not corrupt, the likeliest solution is to suppose that this Zedekiah of ver. 16 is an otherwise unknown brother of Jeconiah, and son of Jehoiakim.

Vers. 17—24.—These verses contain a line of descent brought down to a point not merely posterior to the Exile, but possibly reaching to the time of Alexander. This line, however, through Solomon is lost so soon as the first name, that of Assir, is passed; Salathiel (Authorized Version) or Shealtiel, being descended from David, not through Solomon, but through Nathan, whole brother to Solomon. This Assir is

not known from any parallel passage; and Luther, Starke, Bertheau, and others, followed by Zöckler (in Lange, "Comm. O. T.") translate the name as *captive*, applying it to Jeconiah. Not all their reasons, however, for this, outweigh one which must be pronounced *against* it, viz. the absence of the article. The Septuagint and Vulgate versions agree with our own. The greater probability might be that Assir derived his name from being born after Jeconiah was in captivity, and such passages as Isa. xxxix. 7, Jer. xxii. 30, may throw some light upon the extinction of Solomon's line here, and the transfer of the succession (comp. Numb. xxvii. 11, and see interesting note on the present place in "Speaker's Commentary"). Salathiel is the Authorized Version incorrect rendering of the Hebrew Shealtiel. In Matt. i. 12 it is said, "And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconias begat Salathiel;" and in Luke iii. 27, "Salathiel, which was the son of Neri." Now, Neri was in the direct line of Nathan. There seems only one way of reconciling these statements—and the method removes similar difficulties in other places also—viz. to distinguish between the descent *natural* and the descent *royal*, and then acknowledge that the former was swallowed up, where necessary, of the latter. One as decisive instance of this kind as that before us is most useful to rule other cases. (For an important allusion to the house and family of Nathan's descendants, as well known at the time, see Zech. xii. 12—a passage probably dating a few years previous to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.)

Ver. 18.—Of the name Malchiram and five following, it must be left still doubtful whose sons they were—whether of Jeconiah (comp. again 2 Kings xxiv. 12, 15; Jer. xxii. 30) or of Neri as possibly brothers of Salathiel, or of neither of these. The first of these suppositions seems almost untenable, the second seems unlikely enough, and the exceeding prevalence of a corrupt text would strongly favour the third supposition. At the same time, it may be observed that ver. 19 proves that the names must belong to the royal succession, and indicates that, whoever Salathiel was in such aspect, that Pedaiah was, who becomes father of Zerubbabel. The verses that follow are thought by Eichhorn, Dahler, Keil, and some others to be an interpolation of later date, chiefly on account of the point to which the genealogy is brought.

Ver. 19.—Pedaiah is now given as the father of Zerubbabel and Shimei. Of the latter of these nothing else is known, unless Lord Hervey's theory below be correct. The former is a great name—its derivation

perhaps doubtful. Strictly it signifies "scattered to Babylon," but (Gesenius, 'Lexicon') if the initial part of the word be strengthened into *yr*, the signification might be "born in Babylon." We have in this name another instance of the treatment just commented on with regard to the name Salathiel in Luke iii. 28. Zerubbabel is elsewhere invariably described as *son* of Salathiel, or Shealtiel; but as the genealogy of St. Luke gives the *natural* descent of Salathiel as from Neri, so does our genealogy in this one place give us the natural descent of Zerubbabel as from Pedaiah, one of Salathiel's brothers; while all other passages (e.g. Ezra iii. 8; Hag. i. 12; Matt. i. 12; Luke iii. 27) give us that for which the genealogical table is chiefly designed, viz. the matter of *succession*, according to which Zerubbabel would be shown as *son*, i.e. link of succession, following on Shealtiel.

Ver. 19.—*Meshullam*. Though this name recurs, and very frequently, in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, yet the person here denoted by it—son of Zerubbabel—is found here only. *Hananiah*, i.q. *Joanna* of Luke iii. 27, the names being the same, but with the component parts transposed, as in instances already given above. In the Gospel, *Hananiah* appears as *grandson* of *Zorobabel*, *Rhesa* intervening. *Shelomith*. This person is mentioned here only. The word, though evidently a feminine form, is found for the name of a man, chief of the *Izarhites* (ch. xxiii. 18), but very possibly by a mere clerical error, as the true form is given in the very next chapter (xxiv. 22) for the same character, viz. *רִנְחָיָה*.

Ver. 20.—The five additional names of this verse must presumably stand apart from the two sons and one daughter of the preceding verse, for some reason. What that reason may be is not known. Perhaps the most natural supposition is that their mother was not the same. The meaning of some of the names, as especially of the last, *Jushab-hesed*, i.e. "Loving-kindness is returned," has led Bertheau and others to the conjecture that they may be separated as children born to Zerubbabel, one of the leaders of the return from captivity, after that return. This seems plausible, except for the consideration that, the more plausible it is, the more we might expect the explanation itself to have been notified.

Ver. 21.—The Hebrew text, followed by the Vulgate, not followed by the Septuagint, reads here *רַבְנָיִם*. Yet some manuscripts have the plural "sons," from which comes our Authorized Version. The indication is important. It is doubly interesting, as the only indication in our Hebrew text that

tends to give confirmation to the very noteworthy differences of the Septuagint Version. For although this last, apparently somewhat perversely, begins its version with "sons," which plural does not so well suit its sequel, instead of the "son" of our Hebrew text, which would suit it, yet it proceeds with a translation which must have been obtained from another text, such text again suiting properly the *singular*—"son"—of our Hebrew. The form of its translation is analogous to that marked in the words of vers. 10-14. "The sons [sic *son*] of *Ananiah*, *Pelatiah*, and *Jesaiyah* *his* son, *Rephaiah* *his* son, *Arnan* *his* son, *Obadiah* *his* son, *Shechaniah* *his* son," making six (presumably) consecutive generations. This, therefore, is the reading which (if correct) might carry down the genealogy to the times of Alexander the Great, and indeed to a time a quarter of a century later. And in doing so, it would certify this entry as of later date than probably any other of the canon! If we reject this position and reading, we have to get over the term, repeated several times, the sons of. To do this, Bertheau suggests that the intention of our passage was, from the name *Rephaiah* inclusive, not to mention the individual four brothers' names, but to mention them as four distinguished families among the posterity of David—an attempt at explanation certainly not satisfactory. The conclusion of the matter is, that in this twenty-first verse we have difficulties in either alternative, not satisfactorily explained. Either we have the names in all of six brothers, being "sons of *Hananiah*"—the last four of whom are styled, not by their individual names, but as heads of families; or we have six lineal descendants from *Hananiah*. If this last supposition were correct, calculate a royal succession at the lowest average (say something under twenty years), and the genealogy, including what follows in the remaining verses of the chapter, will bring us, as above, to a date that covers the whole life of Alexander the Great.

Ver. 22.—In the obscurity that obtains on the subject, there is one somewhat bright star of light in a succeeding name, *Hattush*, to which this verse leads us. This verse purports to help on the line of genealogy by a contribution of two descents, the effective names being *Shemaiah* and *Neariah*, the line coming to its close by aid of two other effective names, *Elioenai* and (say) *Hodaiyah*, contained in the last two verses of the chapter. Although one manifest error in ver. 22 (involved in the number "six" when only five sons have been read) beokens the insecurity of the text, yet the summary measures of the ingenious Lord A.

C. Hervey (see his valuable work on the 'Genealogies of our Lord Jesus Christ,' pp. 103, 307, 322; and articles in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. 666, 667) can scarcely be warranted, when he wishes first to omit altogether the words and the sons of Shechaniah; Shemaiah; and next, to regard Shemaiah as Shimei, the brother of Zerubbabel, and, as matter of course, those who followed as the descendants of this brother of Zerubbabel, instead of Zerubbabel himself. Now, a passage in the Book of Ezra helps us much here. Ezra mentions, as one of those of the "sons of David" who went up with him from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezra viii. 2, 3), Hattush, "of the sons of Shechaniah." There is not only nothing to prevent this Hattush being the same as the elder brother of Neariah, who comes fourth in succession from Zerubbabel (i.e. on the hypothesis that the six names of ver. 21 are brothers, not a line of descendants), but at the above-mentioned average of twenty years the dates will admirably synchronize—the last date of Zerubbabel being about B.C. 520, and that of Neariah B.C. 440; while the date of Ezra's journey was B.C. 458 (see 'Speaker's Commentary,' iii. 186, 187). This coincidence of names and dates must not be regarded as conclusive; but, pending further discovery, it strongly disfavours the idea of the names of ver. 21 constituting a succession, and it keeps well in check the rate of succeeding generations, bringing the last member of

the succession to a date that may be harmonized with others which have for the most part held their ground. That in ver. 22 only five names are given for what are summed up as "six," must lead to the supposition that one has dropped out; and since no known manuscript of the Hebrew text, nor the Septuagint or Vulgate versions supplies us with the missing name, the Syriac and Arabic versions, which supply the name Azariah between Neariah and Shaphat, must be viewed with some suspicion. Igeal is, in the Hebrew, a word (יְגַאל) identical with the Igal of Numb. xiii. 7; 2 Sam. xxiii. 36—Septuagint in the latter passages Ιααλ or Ιγαλ, but in the present place Ιωηλ. Of the other persons in this verse little or nothing else is known.

Ver. 23.—None of the names in this or the following verse assists as yet in throwing any light upon the questions that arise in this fragment of genealogy. Lord A. C. Hervey would identify Hodaiah (ver. 24) with Abiud (Matt. i. 13) and with Judi (Luke iii. 26), and quotes, for very just confirmation of the possibility so far as the mere names are concerned, Ezra iii. 9; Neh. xi. 9; compared with Ezra ii. 40; ch. ix. 7. His investigations on the comparison of the genealogies of this chapter with those of Matt. i. 9 and Luke iii. 9. are well worthy of attention, and may be found in his work above referred to, and in his articles of Smith's 'Bible Dictionary.'

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—Checkered life. These verses suggest to us the thought which continually recurs in studying the life of David, viz.—

I. **HOW JOY AND SORROW MINGLE IN THE LIVES OF MEN.** To David were given many elements of joy: he had the outward dignity, the comfortable and even splendid surroundings, the authority and influence which belong to Oriental sovereignty: he reigned altogether forty years (ver. 4). For this large period of his life the pleasures of regal pomp, wealth, and power were at his command. But his was far from a cloudless day. In the home circle, where the sweetest joys are commonly found, there were abundant sources of trouble and distress. In his "first love," Michal, he was bitterly disappointed, and she was "childless unto the day of her death." His concubines deserted and dishonoured him (2 Sam. xvi. 22). As we read in these verses (vers. 1—8) the names of his children, we are struck with the thought—how little there was in them to give their father a parent's joy! how much to cause him a profound anxiety, or even poignant grief! If national prosperity or military success elated the king's heart, domestic dissatisfaction, home troubles, must soon have clouded his brow. Thus is it with us all: joy and sorrow may not spring from these two sources, they may not mingle in these proportions, but they are bound up together in the same bundle; they intermingle and interlace in every human life. Bodily gratifications, success, power, the endearments of human love, the hope of higher and greater things, the joy of beneficence, on the one hand; care, loss, toil, disappointment, regret, the "wounded spirit," on the other hand. It is a checkered scene, this plain of human life; sunshine and shadow fall fitfully upon it as we pass on to the far horizon. This aspect of

David's household, recalling to us the contrasts of his experience, may lead us to remember—

II. **How God disciplines our hearts.** David would hardly have been the humble and devout man he was and continued to be, if he had enjoyed an unbroken course of triumph and satisfaction. The best graces of the human soul cannot thrive in perpetual sunshine; they must have the searching winds and the pelting rains of heaven. If God sends us loss and trouble, if he "breaks our schemes of earthly joy," it is to foster in our hearts those virtues of meekness, resignation, lowliness of heart, considerateness of others, etc., which we should not keep alive if the "barns were always filled with plenty," and the cup were always overflowing with earthly joy. We may especially learn here—

III. **How God prepares us for holy service.** David would never have left us the psalms which proceeded from his pen if his earthly life had not been the checkered thing it was. It was from a troubled if not a broken heart that those deep utterances were poured. It was from a soul that could find no rest and joy but in the faithful God, "the very present Help in trouble," that flowed the precious passages which are the comfort of mankind. 1. God never calls us to any estate so high as that of sacred service—the spiritual help we render our kind. 2. We cannot possibly serve to the full height of our power if we do not learn sympathy by suffering. 3. Therefore God leads his children into deep waters, that, through such baptism, they may comfort, heal, and bless the sorrowing and stricken souls who wait their ministering hand.—C.

Vers. 10-24.—*The best rewards of piety, etc.* This list of the names of the sons of David before and after the Captivity suggest three truths—

I. **THE BEST REWARDS OF PIETY.** To David God gave the promise that his children should sit upon his throne; to Solomon he gave a brilliant court and large exchequer. David had the high and lofty satisfaction of looking forward to future years, and knowing that his descendants would be wielding power and exerting influence for many generations. Solomon had his reward in the "things which are seen and temporal"—in great wealth, in a large harem, in foreign alliances, in growing merchandise, etc. The one reward was elevating, ennobling; the other proved to be hurtful and demoralizing. We are very apt to look for temporal prosperity, earthly honour, material gratification, as the guerdon of devotion; but if this should be given us, it may end at last in spiritual depression and failure. God may give us our request, and send leanness into our soul (Ps. cxi. 15). We should rather desire mental and spiritual bestowedments, delights of the soul, gladness of the heart—

"The joys which satisfy
And sanctify the mind;"

those which have no tendency to enfeeble or to mislead, but which tend rather to enrich and to enlarge the soul.

II. **THE VANITY OF HUMAN FAME.** It is impossible not to be struck with the obscurity of the names which occur in some of these verses (vers. 10-24). It is something, indeed, that a man's name should find a place, however humble, in such an imperishable record. But these men lived and died without enjoying any such anticipation, and it is nothing to them now. The desire for distinction is natural to noble minds; and if it be honourable fame, and not mere worthless notoriety they seek, we must pay them praise and not accord them blame. But the fact that, as time proceeds, human fame becomes of less account, and that the very names of succeeding kings may become nothing more than a tedious chronicle, only read by way of duty, may well lead us to choose a more worthy and a more lasting portion. There are blessings to be sought and gained, the value of which does not decline with the passage of the years or even of the centuries. It is these which the wise will covet, which the holy will secure.

III. **THE EXCELLENCY OF GODLY ZEAL.** There is one name in this list which stands out among the rest as that of a man whom all the servants of God "delight to honour"—Zerubbabel (ver. 19). To have been the ancestor or the descendant of such a man

was itself an honour. We regard his career as one of the worthiest and most fruitful which even the Holy Scriptures have recorded. His godly zeal did much to carry on the purpose of Jehovah from the return of the captives to the coming of the Lord. To have lived such a life and to have done such a work may satisfy the very largest ambition which the heart of man can hold. To look back from the spiritual world on such a work accomplished must be an increase to heavenly joy. There are few satisfactions, if there be any, which give a truer, deeper, diviner delight to the regenerated soul than the conviction that, by the help and grace of God, we are sowing the seeds of holy usefulness, of which future generations will reap the blessed harvest.—C.

Vers. 1-24.—*Genealogy of Israel's royal household.* Before entering upon the genealogies of the tribes of Israel in their due order, we are directed to fix our attention on the royal line. In vers. 1-9 we have all the sons of David enumerated, viz. six born in Hebron and thirteen in Jerusalem. The number of David's sons born after his removal to Jerusalem was eleven; only nine are mentioned here—two are omitted, either on account of early death or no issue. In vers. 10-16 the line is given from Solomon to Jeconiah and Zedekiah—the time of the Exile. From vers. 17-24 we have the line of the captive and exiled Jeconiah, and other families. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned over forty years. Seven years and a half of these were over Judah in Hebron, and thirty-three over Israel and Judah united in Jerusalem. In 2 Sam. v. we have his first public anointing to be king over Israel. This anointing took place at the time that David was king over Judah in Hebron. In 2 Sam. ii. we are told that the men of Judah came to Hebron—to which place David went by the command of God—and there they anointed him king. This, however, was not his first anointing. The Divine call and anointing took place ten years previously, during the reign of Saul, and was carried out at God's command by Samuel the prophet, as is fully recorded in 1 Sam. xvi. Of Solomon himself little is said in this chapter. He reigned forty years over Israel in Jerusalem. Our attention is chiefly directed to David. The historian enters into more minute details in his case, both with regard to his family and to his reign. As the head of the royal line, he is brought into greater prominence. As the type of Christ, this is also as it should be. From this fountain-head all blessings flow. David, like David's Son and Lord, has here the pre-eminence. Throughout this chapter three kings of the royal line stand prominently forward in connection with the people of God.—David, Solomon, and Zedekiah. Others, such as Josiah and Hezekiah, were distinguished as kings, but it is to these our attention is chiefly directed, on account of their typical bearing in connection with the kingdom of God. We shall look at them in this light, and see the reason why such prominence is given.—W.

Vers. 1-9.—*The kings of the royal line—David and Solomon: the lessons of their lives.* Under the reign of David the kingdoms of Israel and Judah may be said to have been established. It was marked from first to last by conflict, war, and bloodshed. Foes on every side, both hidden and open, had to be encountered, battle after battle to be fought. In all this he stood alone, and thus stands before us as the type of Christ. He encountered all our spiritual foes. He fought the great fight. "Oft the people there was none with him." All the powers of darkness were leagued against him. He endured the frown of man, and bore the wrath of God. He fought the fight and won the victory, and the kingdom of God was thus established in the Name of David's Son and Lord. In his sufferings in Gethsemane and on the cross he trod all the powers of darkness down, and in his resurrection from the dead God set his seal to the accomplishment of his work and the establishment of his spiritual kingdom, against which the gates of hell can never prevail. Of him it could be said, as was said of David himself (see ch. xxii. 18), only in an infinitely higher sense, "Hath he not given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the Lord, and before his people." But, though David may be said to have founded and established the kingdom, he was not permitted to build the house of God. This was to be Solomon's work. The kingdom, thus established, was passed over to him to erect in it the great temple of God. Solomon, "the peaceful one," as his name signifies, was thus entrusted to complete the

great work for which David had made all the preparation. Solomon follows David spiritually as surely as historically. It is but the gospel story in another form. In these early chapters of this book we see these names of David, Solomon, and Zedekiah closely interwoven with those of the twelve tribes, or the entire family of God. They are, in fact, inseparable. As the "vine and the branches," they are one living tree. Not only is it true of David and Solomon spiritually, but of all God's people—it is first conflict, then rest. It is through the former we enter into the latter. "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom." Only they who "fight the good fight of faith," who are the true soldiers of the cross, know how deep is the peace of God that becomes the portion of the soil. There is a peace which flows from the sight of a suffering Saviour bearing our sins. This is not the peace we mean. It is that peace which is the result of being true to Christ, living near to him, being *wholly* on his side—a *marked* man—who is not ashamed of his reproach. All this involves a daily, yea, hourly, conflict; and out of this God opens the channels of the soul for a peace to flow in which "passeth all understanding," and to which other Christians are strangers. But not only are David and Solomon the law of the kingdom of God,—it is the law of all things. Before the peace always goes the sword. This was our Lord's teaching when he said, "I am not come to send peace, but a sword." Peace follows. The storm and tempest are absolutely necessary to purify the air. To these both spring and summer owe their beauty. It is first the sorrow and then the joy that is the order of life. "The evening and the morning were the first day," and seem on the very first page of God's Word to reflect this truth. Through the evening the world still passes to its mornings. The first chapter of Genesis is all sunlight. But what a deep, dark cloud passes over all the book of God, what a history of sin and sorrow, crying and tears, till we reach its close, and then the sun rises again, never more to go down! We might go on to show how all life is full of this law; but this will suffice to help the reader's further thoughts. And as every stone of Solomon's temple rested on the work David had finished, and the preparation he had made, so do all the "living stones" of God's spiritual temple rest on the finished work of Christ, and everything really substantial on his conflict, struggle, and cross. And peace deeper than anything Solomon's reign could shadow forth fills their souls, even that peace which was his gift to all his people when he said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."—W.

Vers. 10—24.—Kings of the royal line—Zedekiah: the lesson of his life. The portraiture of the Holy Spirit would be incomplete without that of Zedekiah. In him we see how every work of God may be undone, how the fairest fabric may become a wreck. If in David and Solomon we have that which will encourage, we have here a note of solemn warning. What is the lesson thus solemnly taught? That *sin* undid all the work of David and Solomon. Sin ruined the kingdom, and lay desolate the temple of God. And in what did that sin consist? In that which is the fertile source of all sin—idolatry. Idolatry is the heart going after something else than God. Its gross form is image-worship. Its more refined and general form is the love of something lower than Christ. The latter is the guiltier, because done under greater light. From this single source everything follows—loss of peace, darkness of soul, weakness of intellect, immorality of life, judicial blindness, and the entire spiritual wreck of everything, whether it be in an individual soul or in a nation. Let God be supplanted, and there is no abyss into which one and the other will not ultimately fall. God's first law to Israel was, "Thou shalt have none other gods before me;" and it is his first law still. Well might the beloved apostle say, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." The utter ruin of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and the desolation of the temple, had one source, consummated by Zedekiah—idolatry. This brought down upon them that wrath of God which has been resting like a dark cloud on the nation ever since. If David and Solomon show us how we may pass through conflict to peace, Zedekiah shows us how we may pass from it all to utter desolation. Needful warning to complete this spiritual picture.—W.

Ver. 4.—David's double reign. The important fact is recalled to mind that David's reign was divided into two parts; for some seven years and a half he reigned over a

portion of the nation, and then for three and thirty years over the whole. His capital during the first part of his reign was Hebron; and during the second part, Jerusalem. It is evidently a point of interest and instruction that, though designed for the throne, and anointed in his early life, David only attained the throne by gradual stages and steps, and there was a long series of remarkable providences ever tending towards, and at last fully realizing the Divine purpose. From David's story we learn that there may be even prolonged *delay* in the fulfilment of the Divine promise, but that very *delay* is used in the ultimate and the more perfect fulfilment of the promise. This may be fully illustrated in the details of David's early history. If God's promise seems "to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not tarry." Immediately on receiving news of the death of Saul, David took action. As long as the anointed of the Lord lived, it was his duty to wait patiently, not to strive, not to assert his pretensions to the throne, not to rebel in any way against the lawful authority. But Saul being removed, no claims remained; he might assert at once his right to the throne. Here, however, the truly *religious* character of David is seen. The way seemed plain before him, but he would not take a step without inquiry of the Lord. He asks both the *when*, the *how*, and the *where*, desiring simply to follow the Divine lead. And he is directed to Hebron, the sacred city of the tribe of Judah. His removal to that city was the signal for the union of the tribe of Judah under his rule. His ultimately securing the allegiance of the entire people, and removing his capital to Jerusalem, was the result of a train of providential circumstances, which indicated the Divine will as plainly as if words of command had been uttered. Many men sin by trying to force God's will into conformity with their own, and deceiving themselves with the idea that they are doing God's will. Happy are they who, in all simplicity, follow God's lead, and are quite willing to wait for God's *time* and God's *way*. The point in David's story recalled by these verses shows us—

I. **DELAY AND PARTIAL FULFILMENT TRYING DAVID'S FAITH.** Years passed, and the promise of his youth seemed ever further off from fulfilment; and even when the fulfilment came, it was far below his hopes, scarcely worth so many years of waiting and bearing. Yet David fully maintained his trust. He never failed; he would not be persuaded to make his own way, by cutting off Saul's life when the king was in his power. David never lost hope. God's way might be in the sea, but God can make pathways even through seas. And *delay* has ever been, and still is, one of the most effective agencies for testing faith. So long as we can *do something*, we can keep trust alive; but it is so hard to "flesh and blood" to be still and wait.

II. **DELAY AND PARTIAL FULFILMENT CULTURING DAVID'S FITNESSSES.** It is always more important that we should be *fit* for a position than that we should gain it; and so the long years of preparatory waiting and experience in lesser spheres are never wasted years. David in the court, David in the cave, and David in Hebron, was being fitted for full royalty at Jerusalem. Life is, for us all, in stages, each with a *view* to the next in advance. We want to leap to the best at once. God will not let us, save in judgment. He brings through the lesser trusts slowly to the greater ones. This gives us one of our best assurances of immortality. We are so evidently in this *delay-time* of earth being fitted for something more and higher. Gain what we may here on earth, we cannot exhaust our spiritual capacities.—R. T.

Vers. 10—19.—Review of the kings. It is specially worthy of notice that, according to his promise, God preserved the Davidic line among all the changes through which the kingdom of Judah passed; and this became a public testimony to the Divine faithfulness, and a constant plea against them when they publicly broke their side of the conditions of the national covenant. We may dwell on—

I. **WHAT THIS UNFOLDS OF GOD'S LONG-SUFFERING MERCY.** For some of the kings of Judah were rebellious and idolatrous; some, as, for instance, Ahaz and Manasseh, so very bad that we marvel at the mercy which held back judgment on the Davidic dynasty. Exactly what we have ever to wonder over is the Divine long-suffering towards us, towards *his Church*, towards *men*. God is infinitely jealous of the honour of his Name as the Promise-maker and the Promise-keeper, and we may even think of God as infinitely *hopeful* concerning his people, waiting on and on, bearing long with them, quite sure that they will yet turn to him and live. But every new impression of

God's patient mercy made upon our hearts only shows up the more hatefully our sin in keeping on and “despising the riches of his mercy.”

II. WHAT THIS UNFOLDS OF GOD'S WITNESS TO HIMSELF. God's *dealings* with men are the revelation of God's *character*. What he *does* is designed to unfold before us what he *is*, and so to ensure personal trust in him. Here mercy blends with faithfulness, and we gain the conception of his righteousness blending with his love, justice and mercy going hand in hand, the King and the Father making the sublime unity of the Divine King-Father. Sometimes we gain impressions of Divine justice, at other times impressions of Divine mercy, and we err if we keep these apart. We only conceive God himself aright when we can blend them to make the perfect harmony of him who is *faithful*, to all his words—faithful to *punish* and faithful to *pity* and faithful to *preserve*.

III. WHAT THIS UNFOLDS OF GOD'S HIGHER AND SPIRITUAL PURPOSES. Far from the preservation of a particular dynasty we rise to the promise of the world's Messiah, who was to be recognized by coming in the Davidic line, and bear a royalty which should be a sublime spiritual royalty, and found a kingdom which should be an invisible but everlasting kingdom. David's kingdom was, by the promise, to be continued *for ever*; and so it is in that Son of David, who yet was David's Lord, and who hath now both an “unchangeable priesthood” and an “unchangeable kingship.” His dominion shall yet prove to be an “everlasting dominion;” he “shall have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.” And into the eternal Davidic kingdom we *should* enter, and we *may* enter, for the King throws wide the door, and calls “whosoever will” to come.—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*The builder of the second temple.* Among the names recorded here, that of Zerubbabel suggests an interesting passage in the Jewish history; and he has a marked individuality, so that his *work* and his *times* may be profitably reviewed. It is noticed as a fulfilling of the Divine promise concerning the Davidic dynasty, that Zerubbabel was a prince of the house of David, and so the returned captives resumed their national life under a Davidic leader, and with a fresh and constantly effective remembrance of the Divine promise and faithfulness. From the narrative in Ezra, details of the work of Zerubbabel may be given. His mission concerned three things: 1. *The leadership of the liberated captives on their return journey to Palestine.* What qualities this demanded—command, courage, patience, cheerfulness, etc., should be fully illustrated. 2. *The erection of a new temple* from the ruins of that of Solomon, and the restoration of the Mosaic ritual and worship. In this he was aided by Joshua, the high priest. Show what further qualities were demanded by this work—power to inspire others, personal godliness, an enduring enthusiasm, and, in view of the efforts of the Samaritans, firmness, unswerving loyalty to God, and a holy jealousy that permitted no compromises in religion. 3. *The establishment of a national and governmental order among the people.* This was the work for which he probably had hereditary genius; and his position and authority, as the Persian Sheshbazzar, enabled him effectively to carry out his schemes. In him may be illustrated the threefold truth: (1) that circumstances call forth the best that is in men; (2) that men may to a large extent mould their circumstances; and (3) that God is ever ready to give his grace and strength, unto the best success, to every man who sincerely wishes to be *found faithful*.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

Vers. 1—23.—After the large space given to the “sons of David,” of the tribe of Judah, in the previous chapter, this chapter returns for twenty-three verses to group together a few additional ramifications of the same tribe, whose registers were for some reasons, perhaps not very evident, preserved and known. The first verses

follow in the direction already indicated in ch. ii., near the end of which we were left with Shobal and Haroeh, probably the same with Reuiah (the same name as Reaia, ch. v. 5, though not the same person).

Vers. 1, 2.—The Carmi of ver. 1 is considered to lie doubtful between the Carmi of ch. ii. 7 or the Chelubai of ch. ii. 9, in which last alternation the five names of this verse would repeat the line of descent with

which ch. ii. had made us familiar. Even then the object or advantage of repeating the first four of these, so far as what follows is concerned, is not evident. We keep near the close of ch. ii. also in respect of another allusion to the Zorathites (ch. ii. 53), whose families were replenished by the two sons of Jahath, Ahumai and Lahad, of all of whom this is all we know.

Vers. 3, 4.—Etam is, with little doubt, the name of a place (2 Chron. xi. 6) in Judah, south of Jerusalem. It was near Tekoa (ver. 5, and ch. ii. 24) and Bethlehem (next verse). The hiatus in the first clause may possibly be supplied by “the families of” from the last verse, or, more fitly, by “the sons of,” inasmuch as some manuscripts have it so. The Septuagint, however, and Vulgate *displace* “the father of” (i.e. *chief of*), replacing it by “the sons of.” The Syriac Version leaves out any notice of the sister, Hazeleponi, and gives the former part of the verse thus: “These are Aminadab’s sons, Ahizareel, Nesma, and Dibas, Pheguel and Husia; These are the sons of Hur, the firstborn of Ephratha, who was the father,” etc. With this the Arabic Version is partly in agreement, but closes the verse with the words, “These are the sons of Hur, son of Ephratha, the father of whom [plural] was of Bethlehem.” The Chronicle Targum translates, “the *rabbis dwelling at Etam*.” This variety indicates the difficulty felt by each in turn. The verse, however, purports to give the names of three brothers and one sister (Hazeleponi, i.e. the shadow looking at me, Gesenius) connected with Etam, as in the following verse Penuel with Gedor (ch. ii. 51) and Ezer with Hushah (ch. xi. 29; 2 Sam. xxiii. 27). Of no one of these, in all six other descendants of Hur, additional to those found at the close of ch. ii., is anything distinct known. It is to be noted that Hur himself is here called father of Bethlehem, while (ch. ii. 51) his son Salma is so called.

Vers. 5-7.—Another before-mentioned person (ch. ii. 24) is brought forward, viz. Ashur, the posthumous son of Hezron by Abia, now again, as there, styled father, or chief, of Tekoa, a town, as above, near Etam, Bethlehem, etc. He is brought forward that the names of his two wives, with four children to the latter of them and three to the former, may be given. The Roman Septuagint unaccountably gives different names to the mothers, and reverses the groups of the four and three children. Nothing else is known of these nine persons. The last two names of the group of four more resemble in form the name of the head of a family than an individual name; and for Jezoar, the middle name of the group of

three, the easy *Keri* of “and Zohar” is followed by the Septuagint, and was followed by our 1611 Authorized Version.

Ver. 8.—The link of connection between the persons named in this verse and the tribe of Judah is utterly unknown. The introduction of them, abrupt as it is, is, however, paralleled by many others immediately following in this chapter, as well as elsewhere. Nothing has yet been produced in elucidation of any one of the persons designated by these names, or of their relation to the context.

Ver. 9.—This is not less true of the name of vers. 9, 10, which, however, has made its own mark amid the whole scene. The episode of these two verses, offering itself amid what should seem, superficially, a dry mass of dead names, is welcome and grateful as the oasis of the desert, and it warns us that life lies hidden at our every footfall on this ground, spread over though it is with monument and inscription, and hollow, as we thought, with the deadest of the dead. But the glimpse of old real life given us in this brief fragment of a biography is refreshing and is very suggestive. It seems an insufficient and unnatural method of accounting for the suddenness of the appearance of this episode to suppose (‘Speaker’s Commentary,’ *in loc.*) that the name of Jabez was well known, from any cause, to those for whom Chronicles may be supposed to have been primarily intended. We prefer by far one account of it, viz. that the work in our hands is not in its original complete state; or, variously put, that it is in its uncompleted original state. No root corresponding to the characters of this name in present order is known; it is possible that some euphonic reason makes the name *யָבֵץ* out of the real word (future Kal) *אָבֵץ*, i.e. he causes pains. We cannot suppose there would be any “play” appreciable on a transposition of alphabetical characters for *mere* play’s sake. The resemblance that almost each part of this brief and abruptly introduced narration bears to incidents recorded in Genesis (xxxiv. 19; xxxiii. 20; iv. 25; xxix. 32; xxviii. 20) and Exodus speaks for itself, and strongly countenances the supposition that it is a genuine deposit of the genuinely olden history of Judah. The mother’s reason for the naming of the child; the language and matter and form (Gen. xvii. 18-20; Exod. xxxii. 32) of the prayer of the child, when presumably he was no longer a child; and the discriminating use of the words *Elohim* (ver. 10) of *Israel*, as compared with the name *Jehovah* (ch. ii. 3; v. 41), generally found here,—all help to produce this impression, although some of

these particulars would carry little conviction by themselves; *e.g.* a mother's reasons for assigning the name of her child long outlived the earlier times alone. Upon the whole, and regarding the passage in its present place, we may say that it must be very much misplaced, or else must be understood to connect Jabez with some branch of the family of Coz. There is the more room to assume this in the vagueness of the last preceding clause, "The families of Aharbel the son of Harum." The origin of the theories of some of the older Jewish writers, to the effect that Jabez was a doctor in the law, with a school of scribes around him, is probably to be found in the desire to find a connection between his proper name, Jabez, and the *place* so named (ch. ii. 55), and where, as we are told, "families of scribes dwelt," belonging to the Kenites. That these were connected with Bethlehem, through Salma, and that Jabez of our present passage was also of a family connected with Bethlehem, is worthy of notice, but is not enough by a long way to countenance the thought, in spite of Targum and Talmud (Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' *sub voc.*). The Targum, as well here as in ch. ii. 55, identifies Jabez with Othniel "son of Keuaz" (Josh. xv. 17; Judg. i. 13; iii. 9), or more probably "the Kenizzite" merely; but there is nothing to sustain such an identification. The description, he was more honourable than his brethren, finds a close parallel, so far as the word *honourable* goes, in Gen. xxxiv. 19; although the honourableness of Shechem, the person there in question, does not come out to anything like the same advantage with that of Jabez, nor at all in the same direction. The word, however, is precisely the same, is often used elsewhere, and uniformly in a good sense, although the range of its application is wide. The essential idea of the root appears to be "weight." The phrase may therefore be supposed to answer to our expressive phrase, a "man of weight"—the weight being sometimes due *chiefly* to character, at other times to position and wealth in the first place, though not entirely divorced from considerations of character. We may safely judge, from what follows, that the intention in our present passage is to describe Jabez as a man of more ability and nobility than his brethren. It can scarcely be doubted that the meaning that lies on the surface is the correct interpretation, when it is said that his mother named him Jabez, saying, *Because I bare him with sorrow.* The sorrow refers to unusual pains of travail, not to any attendant circumstances of domestic trial, as *e.g.* that the time of his birth was coincident with her own widowhood, as hap-

pened to the wife of Phinehas, when she named her offspring "Ichabod" (1 Sam. iv. 19—22).

Ver. 10.—When Jabez grew to manhood he has learnt to estimate rightly the value of God's blessing. He invokes it, and depends upon it. His language implies the confidence that he had in the reality of providential blessing. For the expression, *enlarge my coast*, see Deut. xii. 20: xix. 8; and though we know nothing as matter of fact about the occasion of this prayer, we may assume that it was one when not selfishness and greed of larger territory, but just opportunity, had awakened a strong desire for enlargement of borders. It may have been a legitimate occasion of recovering his own, lost or wrongfully taken from him or his predecessors before him, or of expelling successfully from their hold upon it a portion of the original inhabitants of the promised land of God's people. That thine hand might be with me. Many are the beautiful parallels to be culled from the Word of God for this expression, as *e.g.* Ezra. xii. 9; Ps. lxxx. 17; cxix. 173; cxxxix. 5, 10; Isa. xlii. 6. And that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! This, the last entreaty of the prayer, is the largest and most far-seeing. Warned by his own name, forewarned by his mother's emphasizing of her own pains in him, he thus concludes. Having begun in the evil of pain and excessive sorrow, he prays that he and his career may not so determine and end. He does not necessarily pray to be preserved from all suffering, but from such baneful touch of evil itself, its principle, its tyrannous, merciless hold, as might bring him to real and irreparable grief. Thus closes the whole prayer, each succeeding clause of which has been under the rule of the initial "if," translated with us, *Oh that.* This well-known Hebrew form of prayer supposes a solemn engagement, and that the answered prayer shall meet with the fulfilment of a vowed promise on the part of the suppliant, according to the pattern of Gen. xxviii. 20. In the absence of that engagement here, we may notice, with Keil, the greater grace of the passage, in that it closes with the statement of the readiness to *hear*, and the abounding readiness to *answer*, on the part of Divine beneficence: *And God granted him that which he requested.* Evidently the thing that he asked pleased the Lord (1 Kings iii. 10, 12); although it was in this case some form of riches, and long life for self, and the life of his enemies, that he asked, and was *not* altogether and in so many words "*a wise and understanding heart.*" Perhaps, also, there was in the way of asking, and in the exact occasion, unknown to us, something

which quite justified the matter of the prayer, and which thus pleased the Lord. The remarkable and arresting episode could not have closed in more welcome or impressive way than when it is thus briefly but conclusively said, "And God granted him that which he requested."

Vers. 11, 12.—Of the whole of the group of names contained in these two verses, it must be said that we are in the dark. The suggestion of Grove, in his art. "Ir-enahash" (Smith's "Bible Dictionary"), is worth notice, that possibly the verses may be a reminiscence of some Canaanitish graft on Judah—the Shuah (שׁועה) of ver. 11 pointing to the Shua (שׁוע) of ch. ii. 3; Gen. xxxviii. 2. Beth-rapha (the house of the giant) looks more like the name of a place than of a person, though the text needs a person, and such may be covered possibly by this name, though it be of a place. Ir-nahash (the city of the serpent). Jerome, in his "Quæstiōnes Hebraicæ in Paral.", asserts or repeats the assertion of some one else that this is no other place than Beth-lehem; taking Nahash as a synonym with Jesse. Unlikely as this is, no place of the name is known.

Vers. 13—15.—We return here to the neighbourhood of names not quite strange. From comparison of the many passages in Numbers, Joshua, and Judges, which contain references to Othniel and Caleb (son of Jephunneh) the stronger conclusion to which we are led is that Othniel was younger brother of Caleb (probably not by both the same parents) and Kenaz a forefather, of course not literally father. The conclusion is not arrived at without difficulty, or with any real certainty. In the present instance, e.g., why should Othniel, if the younger brother and so expressly and repeatedly mentioned, be taken first? For the possible Kenaz of this passage, we might then refer to ch. i. 53; Gen. xxxvi. 42. Hathath. The marginal reading, which joins Neonothai at once to Hathath, and then supplies "who" before "begat Ophrah," is decidedly to be adopted. Joab son of Seraiah is not to be assumed to be one with Joab son of Zeruiah. The valley of the Charashim (see also Neh. xi. 35), i.e. smiths, or crafts-men lay east of Jaffa, and behind the plain of Sharon; and is said by Jerome, in his "Quæstiōnes Hebraicæ in Paral.", to have been, according to tradition, named so because the architects of the temple came thence. Iru. Perhaps the real name is Ir, and the final *vau* rather an initial for the next name. Elah. Probably another name is wanting after this, which the *vau* will then join to Kenaz; otherwise, as *vau* will not translate "even," the following name

will become, as in the margin, *Uknaz*. The wanting name might be the *ehaleel* of the next verse. This last name is in the Hebrew identical with the *Jehaleel* of our Authorized Version (2 Chron. xxix. 12).

Ver. 16.—Of none of the characters of this verse can anything be said beyond what appears here.

Vers. 17, 18.—From the tangle of these verses it is hopeless to attempt any certain conclusions. The fact of the antithesis of the Jewess wife (by some assigned as wife to Ezra), and the presumably Egyptian wife mentioned in the latter verse, is perhaps just enough in the general obscurity to suggest that Mered, the asserted husband of the latter, is to be understood as the husband of the former also. But to compass so much as this, we have to overlook omission in ver. 17 and inversion in ver. 18. There is a tone about the verses, due to names they contain, that might suggest to us the times of Egypt and Moses, and traditions in keeping do not fail to come to view in Jerome ("Quæstiōnes," etc.; see also art. "Mered," Smith's "Bible Dictionary"). The four places, Eshtemoa, Gedor, Socho, Zanoah, may all with tolerable confidence be identified in Josh. xv. 48—58, as of the number of the cities "in the mountains," though Zanoah and Socho are found also "in the valley" (Josh. xv. 33—36). In this passage the Septuagint gives us no help, but betrays its own perplexity, offering to make Jether the *father* of Miriam; while the Syriac and Arabic versions simply skip the verses as incoherent.

Ver. 19.—The first clause of this verse in the Hebrew is, And the sons of the wife of Hodiah. The margin offers the *Jewess* again for *Hodiah*. Nothing is known explanatory of the descriptive word *Garmite* here. Its meaning, according to Gesenius, is "bony." Eshtemoa is here distinguished from the same-spelt word in ver. 17 by the description the *Maach*-white, *Maach* being a region at the foot of Hermon, bordering on and belonging to Syria.

Ver. 20.—The names of this verse obtain no light from other passages. The Septuagint (Alexandrian), *in loc.*, speaks of "Someion, the father of Joram," in the former verse which probably stands for this Shimon. Also the Septuagint for Vulgate, instead of counting Ben-nanan as the name of a third son, translate it, as of Rinnah "son of Hanan." Ishi; not to be confused with ch. ii. 31, son of Appaim. Our Authorized Version, following the Vulgate, does not translate Ben-zoheth, while the Hebrew would read naturally "Zoheth, and the son of Zoheth."

Vers. 21—23.—The first of these verses takes us back to ch. ii. 3, where the first

three of the patriarch Judah's sons are introduced in the genealogy, as Er, Onan, and Shelah; where of Er it is said, "He was evil in the sight of the Lord; and he slew him;" and where nothing is added of Onan or Shelah. It would appear now that Shelah gave the name of the slain brother to his son. Regarding this Er of Leeah—with little doubt the name of a place—and Laadah, nothing else can be adduced; but Mareshah (ch. ii. 42) is the name of a place in the *Shefelah*, given in the same passage with Kailah and Nezib (Josh. xv. 44; see also 2 Chron. xi. 8; xiv. 9). The fine linen (אֲרָם) here spoken of is, according to Gesenius, equivalent in this passage and in the later Hebrew, to the *bysseus* of the Egyptians (Exod. xxvi. 31; 2 Chron. iii. 14), the εὐρετής, from which the Syrian *bysseus* (Ezek. xxvii. 16), to which ρύζις does more strictly apply, is distinguished in some other places. It was of fine texture, costly, and used as the clothing of kings (ch. xv. 27), of priests (2 Chron. v. 12), and of the very wealthy (Esth. i. 6; viii. 15). Gesenius says that, after long research and dispute, microscopic investigations in London have concluded that the threads of the cloth of *bysseus* are linen, not cotton. Ashbea (אַשְׁבָּא) is not yet recognized elsewhere. Jokim. Gesenius considers this name (יְהִקִּים) as a contracted form of יְהִקִּים (Joiakim) of Neh. xiii. 10. Chozeba. The meaning of this name is "lying;" not found elsewhere, it is probably the same as the אַרְמָה, a town in the tribe of Judah (Gen. xxxviii. 5), and that is probably the same as the אַרְמָה, of the "valley" list of Judah cities (Josh. xv. 41) and of Micah i. 14, where it is mentioned in near connection with the Mareshah, which also accompanies it in the above "valley" list. Joash. This name appears in three forms: אֲרָם, as in the text and 2 Kings xii. 20; אֲרָם, as in 2 Kings xii. 1; and ρύζις, as in ch. vii. 8. Saraph. This is the word the plural of which gives us our *seraphim* (Isa. vi. 2), and is from a root of somewhat uncertain meaning. The different significations to which the root seems to lend itself in the substantive, according as it is used in the singular or plural, are startling (see Gesenius, 'Lexicon,' *sub voc.*). The apparent meaning of this verse is that there was a time of old, when the above, of whom we can ascertain nothing elsewhere, ruled over Moab. Jerome, in the Vulgate, has made a strange rendering of this verse by translating some of the proper names, and reading at least one of them, the first, as though it were a form in the Hebrew (וְרָם), which it is not: *Et qui* *sure fecit solem, circuque Alendacii et Securus*

et Tircendens, qui principes fuerunt in Moab et qui reversi sunt in Lahem; hæc autem verba vetera. Thus Jokim is turned into El melech, and the men of Chozeba into Mahlon and Chilion of the Book of Ruth, and Jashubi-lehem into Naomi and Ruth; and the last clause of the verse is equivalent to citing the Book of Ruth. Barrington ('Genealogies,' i. 179) regards Jokim as Shelah's third son in this enumeration; and others regard Jashubi-lehem as his fourth son. The preposition ל prefixed to אַרְמָה, and following the verb, is to be noted. Ver. 23 brings us to the last of Judah, and leaves us to part with the account of the tribe in the same obscurity which has lately involved it. The plants and hedges are probably an instance of inopportune translation of proper names, which should rather appear as *Netaim* and *Gedorla*, the former place or people not found elsewhere, but the latter possibly referred to. Josh. xv. 36. Again, who they were that were the potters, is not clear—whether all of the preceding verse, or the last mentioned. From the last clause it may be probably safely concluded, that those designated, whoever they were, were employed habitually in the service, not indeed of one king necessarily, but of the succession of royalty. Passages that may be taken to throw interesting light upon this subject are ch. xxvii. 25—31; 2 Chron. xxvi. 10; xxvii. 4; xxxii. 27—29.

Vers. 24—27.—The second of the twelve tribes is now taken, and occupies but small space as compared with Judah preceding, or Levi and Benjamin when their turn comes. The comparison of the enumeration of the sons of Simeon here with that in Gen. xlvi. 10, Exod. vi. 15, is helpful in detaching the idea that the compiler of Chronicles copied direct from Genesis and Exodus, or that he depended exclusively on identical sources of information. That comparison shows six names in both of those passages for only five here, and it shows also difference in three of the names, viz. Jemuel, Zohar, and Jachin, for Nemuel, Zera, and Jarib. On the other hand, the list of Numb. xxvi. 12 is in exact agreement with our list here (the omission of Ohad in both being sufficiently accounted for by one and the same reason), with the exception of Jarib here for Jachin still there; and this solitary difference may justly be suspected to be nothing but an early corruption of *resh* for *capit* and *beth* for *nun* (see Kennicott, 'Diss.' i. 178; Barrington's 'Genealogies,' i. 55). Ver. 25 contains three descents from one of these—Shaul. Of Shallum, the first, it may be noted that there are fourteen others of the same name in the Old Testament; and of Mibsam and Mishma (whom some call brothers,

surely in error), that there were others of the same name (and certainly given as brothers), viz. the sons of Ishmael (Gen. xxv. 13; ch. i. 29). Ver. 26 adds apparently another three descents, viz. from Mishma. Of the first-named of these, Hamuel, it may be noted that the name appears in many Hebrew manuscripts as *Chammuel*; of the second-named, Zaccur, that six others of the same name (though the Authorized Version gives them Zaccur) are found in Numbers, the First Book of Chronicles, and Nehemiah; while on the third, Shimei (of which name the Old Testament contains fifteen others), our attention is especially detained as father of sixteen sons and six daughters, though it is observed that his brethren (query *Hammuel* and *Zaccur*) had not large families. The smallness of the whole tribe relatively to Judah, was only saved from being smaller by him. With this agrees the census of Numb. i. 23, 27; ii. 4, 13; xxvi. 14. It is possible that this Shimei is the same with Shemaiah of ver. 37.

Vers. 28—33.—These “thirteen cities with their villages” and “five cities” are found, with some slight differences, in Josh. xix. 1—9 (comp. xv. 26—32, 42). They were carved out of the “portion of Judah,” which had been found *disproportionately* during the interval that elapsed between the first settlements, viz. of Judah and the sons of Joseph, and the completion of the settlements westward of Jordan (Josh. xviii. 1—6; comp. Judg. i. 3, 17). From the second of these groups, Tochen (see suggestion in ‘Speaker’s Commentary,’ *in loc.*) is omitted in Josh. xix. 7, where only “four cities” are summed. The allusion (ver. 31) to the reign of David is sufficiently explained by the fact that during his persecuted wanderings he was often in the portion of Simeon, to three of the cities of which he sent presents from the spoils of the Amalekites (1 Sam. xxx. 26—31); and Ziklag became his own (1 Sam. xxvii. 6), special mention being made of how it passed into the tribe of Judah. The fuller name of Baal (ver. 33) is given as Baalath-beer in Josh. xix. 8, where it is followed by the addition “Ramath [height] of the south.” It may be noted that this description of the allotment of Simeon begins with Beér-sheba and ends with Baalath-beer. The expression (ver. 33), and their genealogy”—**וְיָדָה** infinitive *Hithp*, used as a noun—will be more properly translated, *their table of genealogy*, or *their registration*. The following **וְיָדָה** may then refer to “their habitations” rather than themselves, so that the clause, as a whole, would mean “These were their dwellings,

and their registration was correct to them.” Bertheau, however, takes the meaning to be, “And there was their family register to them,” i.e. “They had their own family register.”

Vers. 34—41.—These verses record an organized and determined movement in quest of new and rich territory on the part of some of the tribe of Simeon. They were thirteen princes of the tribe of Simeon who led the movement, possibly representing respectively the “thirteen cities” given above. The movement took place in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah (B.C. 726—698). That the house of their fathers had increased greatly is probably mentioned as some explanation of the cause of the movement. Though in one name out of the thirteen (ver. 35) the ancestors are traced to the third generation, and in another (ver. 37) to the fifth, no name is reached of the sons of Simeon enumerated in vers. 24—27. These mentioned by names is to be translated strictly *these coming by names*; and it is open to question whether the word of ver. 41, **וְיָדָה**, be not omitted after **וְיָדָה**; so that the passage would read, “These that came, written by names, were princes in their families.” Of the names, twenty-two in all, found in these verses, just so much is known as is here written.

Ver. 39.—The place Gedor cannot be identified in this connection. There is a town of the name situated in the mountainous district of Judah between Halhul and Beth-zur, to the north of Hebron (Josh. xv. 58). It is evident that this cannot be the place we require here. There is another town of the name (ch. xii. 7), probably belonging to Benjamin, and which as little admits of being fitted in here. Both the Alexandrine and the Vatican Codex of the Septuagint, however, evidently read **גֵּרָה** for **גֵּדָר**. Now, Gerar of the Philistines would suit well for position and description, and also (Gen. x. 14) for the allusion found here (ver. 40) to the dwelling there “of old” of the people of Ham. The Hebrew word, however, generally applied to the valley of Gerar (**גֵּרָה**, wady) is not the word used here of Gedor (**גֵּדָר**, ravine). See Stanley’s ‘Syria and Palestine,’ p. 159, and note. Not only are references frequent to the fertility of Gerar, but the significance of that in 2 Chron. xiv. 14 speaks for itself. This alteration of reading, however, with acceptance of the Septuagint manuscripts, cannot be regarded as altogether satisfactory, and Keil (‘Comm., *in loc.*’) offers some suggestions of weight against those of Ewald, Bertheau, and others.

Ver. 41.—The habitations that were found there. So the Authorized Version, which has mistakenly Englished a word which should have been left a proper name, “the Maonites,” *i.e.* the people elsewhere called in the Authorized Version the Mahumim. In doing this, our translators followed the Targum, copied by Luther and Junius (but see Gesenius, ‘Thesaurus,’ 1002 *a*; ‘Notes on Burchardit,’ 1069; Bertheau, in ‘Chronik,’ and Septuagint reading). Unto this day, in this verse, as also in ver. 43, must not be understood to mark the date of the compiler of Chronicles, but that of the document or authority upon which he as a compiler drew—*anterior*, of course, to the Captivity.

Vers. 42, 43.—These verses give the further exploits, with a view of settlement, of certain of the tribe of Simeon. And of them we should prefer to apply to those already mentioned (vers. 34—41), did the expression stand alone. But the following clause in apposition, of the sons of Simeon, seems intended to *prevent* the supposition that *they* are the Simeonites to whom alone allusion is made. Keil again (‘Comm.,’ *in loc.*) refers those intended to ver. 27, because

he reads, for Ishi, the Shimei of ver. 27, on very insufficient grounds. It is a question whether the movement of ver. 42 is to be understood as arising out of that other the account of which closes in ver. 41, or whether it were not a co-ordinate movement. It still would probably enough spring from the same intrinsic causes. The allotment of the tribe of Simeon carved out of that of Judah was found too small for their growing numbers, though Simeon was not of the most numerous. Nor is it necessary to suppose—perhaps it is rather necessary to *correct* the impression—that this expedition, issuing in a permanent settlement, lay at all near the conquests of the “thirteen princes.” It is, on the whole, most natural to consider that one event concludes with ver. 41, and that the following events (vers. 42, 43) are distinct and independent. All requisite light as to who these “smitten Amalekites” were, is for them too significantly furnished by comparison of 1 Sam. xxvii. 8; xxx. 1; 2 Sam. viii. 12; with 1 Sam. xiv. 48; xv. 7. Of the names, five in number, found in this verse, just so much and no more is known.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 9.—*A unique instance of the beneficent disappointments of human suffering’s cry.* The remarkable position of the brief episode, consisting of this and the following verse, does but draw our closer and more willing attention to it. Is it not like a spring in the dry land? Is it not like an oasis in the desert? Or again, in other figure, if the whole scene, in the very midst of which this brief narration is found, resemble some vast burying-place (and surely it does very much resemble this), crowded with tombstones which are worn with age and dishonoured by forgottleness and indifference, here the eye and the mind too are detained by an inscription worthy the notice and the thoughtful meditation. The inscription in question is not a long one. It is far from savouring of anything fulsome. But it is striking, and with the strikingness of suggestion rather than of assertion; of what, unsaid, *insists* on coming to the thought, rather than of what, *said*, tasks unwilling thought. It must be called a Scripture providence which has preserved, and has in this way brought to the front, this interesting incident. We will for a moment shut off this verse from the following, and upon it, by itself, concentrate attention. It suddenly introduces to us one Jabez, grown presumably to years of manhood. And in designed, we may say manifestly designed, antithesis to the characteristic so “honourable” affixed to the mention of his name, a reminiscence of his *christening* furnishes us with the intelligence *how* he came by his name of sorrow. He has disappointed that name. The promise of its sadness he has not fulfilled. The exceeding pains of the mother seem to have led the way to a good and happy career for the son. And a dark morning’s outlook has grown to a bright day. Let us notice that—

I. THERE IS A CERTAIN INSTRUCTIVE SUDDENNESS IN THE INTRODUCTION OF THE MATTER OF THIS VERSE. Abruptly as the name of Jabez here comes upon us, abrupt as is the introduction of the brief sketch of his history, it is nothing more abrupt than the case as it presents itself not unfrequently in real life, both then and now, and the facts of which are identical with those of the instance here presented to us. The very manner of Scripture history and biography harmonizes well with the *matter* of well-known life, and often reminds us of it. The surprises which Providence prepares or

permits in the matter of human circumstance, character, career, have always been many; and though their number ceases not, they maintain the quality of their force.

II. THERE IS A CERTAIN SINGULARITY BROUGHT TO NOTICE IN THIS VERSE. A comparison is distinctly instituted. It is an invidious one. Happily, though invidious, it is a scriptural one. "Jabez was more honourable than his brethren." It is a comparison the more pronounced in that it lies within the range of one family. The defence of it is: (1) *First* and in part, that it was no doubt utterly true—probably signally true. Further, (2) that there was special, practical use in giving prominence to it. It was for the good of others, not for the satisfaction of individual pride or ostentation. And (3) that the simplest statement of it, free from any flattery and any enlargement, was serviceable to gain a point of great moment. That point was one on a very different scale and of very different magnitude from any mere ordinary occasion. It brings into relief a contrast, and a very touching contrast, between the hasty verdict of present human feeling and experience, and the great, irresistible purposing and doings of the Divine mind in the midst of this lower scene of things. We are borne on a strong current, we are whirled round on many and frequent eddies. The cry of anguish and of anger, the murmur of discontent and of doubt, often break from our lips and rise on high. This the reason thereof—that we thanklessly forget that very thing, *viz.* that we *are* borne on a strong current, that an irresistible hand is laid upon us, and a sovereign purpose is Lord over us. We are not told how or in what respects "Jabez was more honourable than his brethren." Therefore that we are told the fact without the detail, argues that a general principle is offered to our notice, and we are invited to grasp and utilize it rather thanlinger amid the interest of mere detail.

III. THE SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS OF A MOTHER IS DELICATELY BUT SIGNIFICANTLY HINTED in the very verse which has stamped the honour of her son. The family—*her* family—is known, and known for good too, by one individual of it. But that individual is the child she marked evermore and signalized as the cause of special and exceeding suffering. But how soon was that suffering over! How soon was it obliterated! How little was it worthy to be compared with the exceeding joy, which, if she lived to see it, the "honourableness" of her son was sure to have given her! The suffering was that of the body, the joy was that of mind and heart. What a comment we have here upon the utterances of human lips, whether hasty or not, whether true to the moment or not, whether not to be wondered at or censured sternly, or the reverse, and the issues that lie with God, the *event* which we may live to see, and which shall be found to contrast so strangely, so sharply with our old feeling, impression, anticipation, or foreboding! The man who rescues that mother's family from oblivion, and finds it a place on the page of the Divine Word for ever and ever, is the child named of old—Jabez. This babe of old, of bitterer pains than usual, must needs therefore, by a loving mother's own act, be chartered to tell to the ends of the earth the tale of her suffering, rather than to bear a testimony to the spirit of endurance and hope and trust that were in her. So Heaven disappoints human calculations, sometimes as much by its undeserved beneficence as at other times by its just visitations of punishment. So Divine strength avails itself of one method of showing its perfection in human weakness. So our Father's generous *eye* overlooks and forgives the suspicion that lurks in *our* eye.

Ver. 10 (first part).—*An example of earnest prayer for earthly things, to be imitated.* "And Jabez . . . enlarge my coat." No sylable nor whisper is heard by us of the child that cost the mother so much suffering in bringing into the world, from the time that he was named till he is now arrived at manhood. Then he is again introduced with this testimony, that he is "more honourable than his brethren." The probability is that this expression does not refer exclusively to honourableness of moral and religious character. It is an equal probability, considering the remarkably uniform usage of the word in a favourable sense, and the balance of its use in even a high sense, that it does by no means exclude these elements. The intermediate time is left to our imagination to fill up. It was not like that intermediate time of our Saviour's life, lit up only by the incident of the temple and the discussion with the doctors, when Jesus was but twelve years of age. We are warranted in permitting imagination to depict all that interval as one continuous growth of goodness and display of spotless holiness.

ness, and it is for quite other reasons that we there bid imagination learn reverence and caution, and chasten itself. Not so here; in the darkness and the silence of some twenty years or more, we are sure that there mingled error and imperfection and sin, with whatever else there was of redeeming feature in character and conduct. Still maturity finds Jabez an honoured man. Considering all things, *that* was not a little thing to say. But better and more to our purpose, it reveals him a man of prayer—a man who knew, who believed in, who practised prayer. Nay, there is something in the first opening of his mouth in this prayer which prepossesses us, and invites special consideration. Let us notice—

I. THE TITLE UNDER WHICH JABEZ APPEALS TO THE OBJECT OF HIS PRAYER. He prays to the “God of Israel.” It is true that these words are not found here within the borders of the prayer itself, but it is also true that the historian says that it was to the “God of Israel” that the prayer of Jabez was directed. This descriptive designation of God would mean at least three things with Jabez. The God of Israel is for him, (1) the God of his fathers; (2) the God who had often wrought wonderful works of interposition, of deliverance, of victory and conquest, on behalf of his people; and (3) he is especially the God whose pronounced and most gracious covenant of truth and mercy was with Israel. The aids of memory are great aids for faith. A lively memory of long-past mercies also tends to kindle gratitude. He who comes with gratitude into the Divine presence wins fresh favour, gains fresh gifts. So also to have promises is one thing. These we all have. To take hold of them, avail ourselves of them, grasp them, is another and far greater thing. To live by the light, and in the strength and joy of *the covenant*, is the grandest privilege any man could possess.

II. THE DETERMINED AND EARNEST DIRECTNESS OF THIS PRAYER. It is the prayer of well-defined petition. Jabez wants a blessing, knows the blessing that he wants, asks it with fervour. He asks it with earnest emphasis. All argues his belief in the need of superhuman help, in the reality of such a thing as superhuman help, and in the availing power of prayer to obtain. This constitutes genuine prayer. It is not, indeed, any one of those high forms of spiritual exercise, the meditation of the unseen, the apprehension of Divine realities, the spirit's communion with the Father of all spirit, and refreshment from his presence. But, on the other hand, it is the prayer which links on earth to heaven, and shows a human hand taking hold, with the free permission of mercy, of God. Jabez goes far on to say, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me,” when he says, “Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!” The emphasis “indeed” is the emphasis of importunity, not of distrust. The meaning, as every reader of the Hebrew knows at once, is “Oh that thou wouldest *greatly* bless me!” As though Jabez meant, “Unworthy as I am, oh that thou wouldest grant me a *great blessing!*” How often our posture is prayer, our language prayer, our tone prayer, yet the reality, the definiteness, the heart of prayer, is far from us! We ask and have not, because we really know not what our own asking is. In the midst of vague form and heartless performance, *nothing* is asked.

III. The instance we have here, and which we shall not do wrong in drawing into a precedent, of prayer offered, and acceptably offered, the burden of which is temporal good, family and private advantage, substance and possession. These all belong to the very structure and texture of our present human life and character. They much tend to make or mar our character. The way in which we get them, use them, give them again, is often the criterion, and very decisive criterion, of everything with us, for good or for harm. The great man of business and the man of great property are borne on a strong current, are tossed on deceitful, dangerous tides; but it may none the less be that, under certain conditions, they are fulfilling appointed and most important offices in the general scene of the world's traffic. But how much securer that man must feel who has gained, and gained much, not by sharp practice, chicanery, unscrupulousness, but by clear views, determined wishes, diligent devotion, and the liberal “blessing,” the “great” blessing of God! Desire for earthly substance is not *necessarily* mere earthly desire. It is too true that it is too often this, but not always. Some of the greatest men of business in the world have been, and are to-day, the best men of business in the Church. By their liberality and charity, by their beneficence and philanthropy, the “cords have been lengthened, the stakes strengthened,” of the tabernacle of the Lord God of Israel. And their watchfulness, their prayerfulness,

their **sustained** Christian consistency and humility, have been an example far and wide.

Ver. 10.—The prayer for the hand. “And that thine hand might be with me.” This amplifying petition follows significantly upon the more definite and specific entreaty of the beginning of the verse. It also takes us into the ancient workshop of language. The countenances of us all, and their infinitely various expression, come from the different combinations of a very few features and other elements. All our words come from the immense number of combinations possible between and among twenty-six letters. And the amazing proportion of the whole vast mass of our language comes from the figurative and the analogic appropriations of what would otherwise be, and once was, a very scanty vocabulary. This is especially observable of our religious and devotional language, though none *truer* of it than of our ordinary language. The twenty-third psalm, and very many sentences of other psalms, give abundant illustrations of the way in which figurative language at once doubles, but in point of fact far more than doubles, language. And the sentence of the text is one of the most elementary and most plain of all illustrations of the kind. The first uses of a hand, the *many* uses of a hand, lend a wealth of imagery, and thereby of enrichment, to language. From the suggestion of the prayer of Jabez to the effect that “the hand” of God “might be *with*” him, let us take opportunity to view some of the chief scriptural representations of the exercise of the Divine hand and of the effects thereof, and thus lead up again to the prayer before us. And we often read of—

I. **THE CREATIVE HAND.** Man is spoken of as the work of God’s creative hands: “Thy hands have made me and fashioned me” (Ps. cxix. 73). So also the heavens: “The heavens are the work of thy hands” (Ps. cii. 25). So, again, the earth and the sea: “The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land” (Ps. xciv. 5). And all living things and things inanimate: “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas” (Ps. viii. 5—8). (See also glorious reminiscences to the same effect, Job x. 8; xiv. 15; xxxiv. 19; Isa. xlvi. 13; lxiv. 8.)

II. **THE HAND OF THE SOVEREIGN, ABSOLUTE OWNER.** (Job v. 18; xii. 10; Dan. v. 23; Eccl. ix. 1; ch. xxix. 12, 16; Ps. xxxi. 15.)

III. **THE HAND OF THE PERPETUAL, BOUNTIFUL GIVER.** (Ps. xciv. 7; civ. 28; cxlv. 16.)

IV. **THE HAND OF ONE THAT DELIVERS, UPLIFTS, AND UPHOLDS.** (Exod. xxxii. 11; Deut. v. 15; Ezra vii. 9; Neh. ii. 8; Ps. xliv. 3; lxiii. 8; lxxiii. 23; Isa. li. 16.)

V. **THE HAND OF THE CORRECTOR AND CHASTISER.** (Judg. ii. 15; Ps. xxxii. 4; xxxviii. 2; xxxix. 10; cvi. 26; Job ii. 10; xix. 21.)

VI. **THE HAND OF WIDEST SWAY AND SOVEREIGN CONTROL**, of power to rule and power to overrule. (Isa. xl. 12; xlvi. 13; Prov. xxi. 1; Dan. iv. 35.)

VII. **THE HAND THAT EXALTS TO REAL HONOUR.** (See the splendid description of Isa. lxii. 3; Ps. xvi. 11.)

VIII. **THE HAND THAT PLEDGES AND SECURES ABSOLUTE AND EVERLASTING SAFETY.** See such passages as more than satisfy the soul; they go far even “to ravish it with the thoughts” of the glory signified. “I have graven thee on the palms of my hand” (Isa. xlix. 16); “They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (John x. 28, 29). And, as during all our lifetime it had been the lesson to be learnt that our breath is in God’s hands, and all our ways and our times in his sovereign hand, so at last it is permitted us to breathe the spirit into that same mighty, merciful, safe hand: “Into thy hands I commit my spirit” (Ps. xxxi. 5). Perhaps it was not all of these powers of the Divine hand that could have been as familiar to Jabez as they may be to us; yet it is evident that he knew and had prized the meaning and the virtue of the *hand* of God. And he does not ask to know it in one particular way nor in another. He does not dictate or suggest—at least, not beyond a certain very wide margin. He prays that the Divine hand may be “with” him—now to help on, now to stop; now to uphold, now, if necessary, to cast down; now to put it on his lips, and to bid his mouth be dumb, and

himself wait the sovereign will of a sovereign God—patient, content, trustful; now to release those lips and open his mouth, that he might render grateful praise to the bountiful Giver of all good, or the loving and careful Protector of all those who put their trust in him. When Jabez says, “Oh that thine hand might be with me!” he puts himself into that vast and secure hand of God, and wishes nothing more, nothing better for himself, than as the little child, feeble, uncertain, and easily wearying, to take the strong hand of his Father. He had simple faith that the hand, the presence of which “with” him he entreated, would be under all events a “good hand upon” him. The surrender of dependence betokened by the prayer was justly as hopeful as it was trustful. We need nothing more than that the hand of God, in all its varied exercise, should be *with us*. But when we have thus prayed, we may not forget what our prayer has been. And in great variety of *experience* on our own part—experience of sorrow, and difficulty, and toil, and slowness, as well as in all the converse of these respectively—we must remember to trace and acknowledge the tokens of *that hand* for which we prayed being *with us*, and not another hand, inferior in goodness and wisdom as well as power. For often the variety and contrasts and reverses of our own mutable state reflect the ever-varying and adapting presence and grace of One who is in himself the Unchanging. How often has our own hand misdone, how often has the hand of others misled or misdirected us! How blessed is he who can say that, for his prayer, God has “beset him behind and before, and has laid his hand upon him”!

Ver. 10.—*The prayer of victory over evil.* “And that thou wouldest . . . may not grieve me.” This is the last petition of the prayer of Jabez. While the foregoing petition was very comprehensive and wide-reaching in one sense, this is comprehensive and far-seeing in another. There could scarcely be a larger or a wiser intreaty than that God would vouchsafe the perpetual presence of his hand—the hand that makes, that gives, that leads, that upholds, that shields, that at last saves with an everlasting salvation. Nor, on the other hand, could there easily be offered prayer that should more betoken self-knowledge, self-distrust, and a wise estimate of the constantly endangered position in which any man may justly describe himself as placed in this present world, than the prayer with which Jabez now sums up what he has to say: “And that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!” Of the few petitions of our Lord’s Prayer, this forms one, and an emphatic one, “Deliver me from evil.” Evil is a large enemy. In one shape or another, it is ever threatening to attack. And if in anything we need superior help, it is in combating a foe so ubiquitous, so persevering, so subtle, and so essentially disastrous. We may observe here—

I. THAT THERE ARE SIGNS OF A USEFUL LESSON HAVING BEEN LEARNT FROM PAIN. Pain is intrinsically evil in this world. It was no original part of it. It is now utilized in many a direction. It is now overruled to many and high advantages. But it is none the less to be noticed as foreign in itself to the nature of God, to the conception of a perfect creation, to the bliss of man. Yet as things are, and as we are, it is wise to learn from even bodily pain. It is often because we will not learn from other suggestions that we are compelled to learn from the actual experiences of pain. We may probably put down something higher to the credit of Jabez. We do not know as fact that he himself had been called to endure much pain, or any at all noteworthy. But he knew his own name. He knew what it meant, and how it had come to be given to him. He took the warning of it, and the forewarning of his mother’s method of emphasizing what were her opinions and convictions on the subject. It was not the mark of Cain that was on his open brow. But the name of a mother’s love and anguish mingled was named upon him. And he prays to the Mightier than he, to preserve him so from *evil*, that it might not bring him to fulfil in his nature what was confessedly his *name*. Two things may be ever well remembered respecting pain: (1) that it must faithfully and honestly be ranked among the enemies of God and the antagonists of perfect nature; but (2) that for a time, and for our present condition, it may be a timely lesson, a source of valuable suggestion, the adapted caution of the hour, the safeguard that may act with the quickness and the certainty of an instinct. Yet, whatever may be said justly and correctly respecting the *acquired* uses of pain, Jabez offers his petition deprecatory of that evil, the fruit and end of which is mere pain.

II. THAT THERE ARE SIGNS OF A CORRECT LESSON HAVING BEEN LEARNT ABOUT EVIL.

ITSELF. It is evident, from the very words of Jabez's prayer, that he distinguishes between evil and gratuitous pain, or unrewarding "grief," as it is here expressed. Evil, i.e. suffering, calamity, more or less of occasional adversity, disappointment, are the absolute lot of man here. It would be vain to shut the eyes to the fact, folly to deny it. But there are immense differences within the range and the limits of what is called evil. Jabez had learnt this. He does not pray to be kept from all suffering, vicissitude, adversity, disappointment, though doubtless he would fain be kept from as much of this as may be. But we are to understand that he earnestly deprecates the baneful touch of evil *itself*. He discerns what its essential principle is. He dreads its tyrannous rule, its merciless hold, its mocking treatment of those who have trusted it, and, if unstayed, its destructive results. He prays, accordingly, to be kept from the evil that would "assault and hurt the soul," and prove the herald of irreparable grief. It is such intrinsic form of evil which the uncompromising petition of our Lord's Prayer puts upon the lips of all his disciples. How certain and distinct this difference is! How much "evil" there is, through which we all are called to pass! But the deep water does not overflow us. How much disappointed hope and sorrow's visit there is for the very best of men, by which in part they have been helped to become what they already are, right and excellent and devout, and by which the best of to-day become yet better to-morrow! This is the "evil we receive also at the hand of God, as well as" his good. It is chastening, purifying, elevating. But contrast with this the sorrow that worketh death. Contrast with this the "wounded spirit." Contrast with this the evil that hardens hearts, sears consciences, cradles remorse, and is fruitless of everything else but unavailing regret. And we shall be ready to join to pray, "That thou wouldest keep me from evil, that" its gratuitous "grief" may not be mine.

III. THAT A LESSON RESPECTING SELF'S GREAT NEED OF SUPERIOR HELP IN THE PRESENCE OF SOME FOES HAD BEEN WELL LEARNT. There are some passages of life when the best and hardest work is the best and most earnest prayer. Not so here. It is said the sailor always has his enemy before him, and the battle ceases not till the haven is won. And men live in such a scene of evil, such surroundings of evil, such dispositions of evil, such a very atmosphere of evil, men are tossed upon such an ocean of evil, that the danger will prove overmastering in *some* direction, unless a man "pray always" and pray this prayer of Jabez. No armour of one's own, no self-knowledge, no vigilance, no pride of foreknowledge, no mere creed of distrust of the vain world, and the wicked heart, and the soul's chief adversary, will suffice. This living, hearty, earnest prayer will alone command the sure victory in the most critical of warfare.

Ver. 10.—*The gracious benignity of answer to prayer.* "And God granted him that which he requested." Abruptly as the name and the prayer of Jabez were introduced, with equal abruptness do they vanish from view. Favourably as they were introduced, so favourably do they seem to take leave of us. The naming of Jabez was indeed that of toilsome travail and tears, but therein was that saying fulfilled, that the going forth with weeping and with precious seed shall issue in a rejoicing return with golden sheaves. For that this was the case may be justly read between the lines, when we are informed that "God granted Jabez that which he requested." The words of this prayer and the several petitions of it we have before us, and they speak for themselves, what they are and aim at. But whether the prayer conveys to us the "request" of Jabez, that one desire of his heart which was enwrapt in all the rest, is not quite plain. Probably it does, and if so it must have been "the enlarging of his coasts." This would not be a request out of harmony with his time of day, or with what men of his position sometimes earnestly wished, and even with diviner instincts sought. To have a sure footing and an abundant footing in Canaan, or in whatsoever land most nearly corresponded to Canaan in the time of Jabez, meant very much more than the mere inheritance or purchase of ever so tempting an estate or property in our day. But if this were not the burden of the prayer, and its central subject, we are but relieved in this, as in all the rest of the context, from detail in favour of principles. In the absence of clear information as to what Jabez requested, we may make sure that he did not ask what was contrary to God's glory to give or to his own good to receive, while on the other hand we are not in want of information as to how he made his requests known. We have seen that manner to be characterized by

simplicity and fervour, by strong conviction of dependence and by trustful reliance, and these were lighted up by hopefulness. And having watched the dependent suppliant, in sympathy with him, we are now invited to see the other sight. God sees his suppliant, and sees him with gracious eye. He hears his suppliant, and bends a willing ear. He approves his suppliant, and "grants him that which he requested." We have here what we may justly regard in the first two particulars as leading instances, in the last as a fruitful suggestion.

I. OF THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER IN GENERAL. The tale is very short, very plain, and, if not true, is simply gratuitously false and misleading. It is the case of the supplication of a righteous man availng much in its operative effect with God. The person who prayed probably exercised no very important and influential sway over society and his fellow-beings around. The thing for which he prayed probably stood in no very vital or active relation to the well-being of those around. Probably the time was no very critical moment, when great issues might depend on what should seem a very small matter, as affecting primarily but one individual. The person, the thing granted, and the time must have had—they always do have—their importance and their own inevitable significance; but this was all that they had now. But in the absence of knowledge of details and of surroundings, it is deemed sufficiently important for the Divine page to use this opportunity of showing us God *answering the earnest, trusting prayer of his child and servant.*

II. OF THE ANSWER OF A MAN'S PRAYER, TRUE TO THE EXACT REQUEST OF IT. This is a thing not always possible. We ask and have not, because we ask amiss. The ways of asking amiss are many, almost innumerable. They may be classified, however, under few heads. The "amiss" may consist in the thing not being good for us; not being for God's glory to give. The "amiss" may consist in the thing asked not being good for us *as yet*. The "amiss" may consist in the thing asked not being the *best* thing for us. How often God withholds the literal answer to give a spiritual substitute! How often, in the very process of gift, short as it is, he substitutes a higher, better prize than that which we asked! How often the very highest mode of answer is found to consist in withholding the solid, material substance, which is what does not last, in order to give the unseen, spiritual substance, which is in its very nature eternal! Sometimes, again, the "amiss" may consist in what we ask not being good for others as well as self. Each of us is part of a great whole, and an intrinsic part of it. Fellowship of joy, vicariousness of suffering, combination in toil and work, partnership on the largest scale, in the largest sense, and in the most searching detail, are all radical elements of our human nature and human life. And the clear vision of these, and the prompt recognition of them, are constantly obscured and eclipsed to us simply because we let self-regard slip into selfishness, forget the second great command, and try to famish on a lower principle in place of flourishing on charity. And it is in prayer that we may not unfrequently give the most subtle illustration of this subtle snare of our nature and life. Hence it may be rarely that God can give the answer of prayer true to the exact matter of it. But here we have a grateful and suggestive instance of the kind.

III. Of the fact that there is in the sovereign Giver the gracious inclination to give, when possible, according to this rule. His is the disposition full of *grace* as to the *method* of giving, as well as of bounty in the matter of *what is given*. We may often spoil what we give by the manner in which we give; not so he. We may often receive, spoiled by the manner of it, what is given; but never so when the gift is from him. These are some of the chief marks of the grace in giving which is so acceptable to those who ask, or who, without asking, stand in need; and they are all suggested by this history. 1. To give if possible just that which is asked. 2. To give it promptly, and make it thereby twice given. 3. To give it without any reflections on the past. 4. To give without imposing conditions on time to come. 5. Still to give, though it be on the part of the supreme, gracious Giver himself, without reminding there and then of the debt which it involves, of the bounty which it reveals, of the absence of claim, right, merit, in default of all of which nevertheless it is not withheld. Most gratefully does that one sentence of the sacred page suggest all these thoughts to us, in which it is said, with effective brevity in reference to Jabez, "And God granted him that which he requested."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 9, 10.—Jabez. These two beautiful verses come in the midst of a dry and (to us) comparatively uninteresting genealogy, like an oasis in a desert. We know nothing at all of the person here mentioned except what is recorded in this passage. Yet there is so much of meaning in these brief sentences, that Jabez is certainly to the readers of this book more than a name.

I. Observe his NAME. Scripture names are often significant. This was given by the mother, in token and memory of the sorrow in which she bore her son. "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children," was the primeval sentence upon the mother of mankind. Yet, as Christ reminds us, it is usually the case that a mother "remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." The mother of Jabez did not forget, and accordingly named the child in memory of her pains.

II. Observe his PRAYER. It is an interesting fact that we know some Scripture characters chiefly by their prayers. Thus we know Agur as having besought the Lord, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." And we know Jabez by the comprehensive petition which he is recorded to have presented to Heaven. 1. It was a prayer to a covenant God—the God of Israel. 2. It was a prayer for *blessing*; i.e. for good as the expression of Divine favour and approbation. 3. It was a prayer for *prosperity*; "Enlarge my coast." We know nothing of Jabez's way of life, whether he was a husbandman, or a warrior, or a ruler; but it is clear that he asked for enlargement of means, or authority, or territory, etc. 4. It was a prayer for *strength*: "That thy hand might be with me." 5. It was a prayer for *safety and purity*. The evil from which this good man would fain be kept was, probably, both temporal and spiritual. How suitable a petition for us all! 6. It was a prayer for freedom from sorrow. If disasters should befall him, or if he should be tempted to apostasy or sin, such a fate would be fraught with grief to his heart.

III. Observe THE ANSWER to his prayer. The petition was large, but it was offered to a King, who was the rather pleased with its magnitude. There was no hesitation, no withholding. A lesson this as to God's willingness to hear and answer the supplications of his people.

IV. Observe HIS HONOUR AMONGST MEN. Who the brethren of Jabez were we know not. The verse contains nothing in disparagement of their character or position. But Jabez was more honourable than they. The Lord is wont to honour those who honour him. Jabez acknowledged God as the Source of his prosperity, and God rewarded Jabez, by raising him to a position of authority and esteem in his family and amongst his countrymen.—T.

Vers. 21, 23.—Weavers, husbandmen, and potters. This portion of the book contains the record of the descendants of Shelah, one of the sons of Judah. The chronicler mentions incidentally the employments of several of these ancient families. Some were engaged in weaving *byssus*, or fine linen. Others were occupied in tilling the estates and tending the herds and flocks of the king. Others, again, pursued the calling of the potter. Now, there is no reason for surprise in meeting with such references in a book of the canonical Scriptures. There is a religious side to all such useful and respectable vocations. Those who follow them may not always be aware of the fact; but a fact it certainly is.

I. HANDICRAFTSMEN AND HUSBANDMEN MAKE USE OF MATERIALS WHICH A KIND PROVIDENCE HAS SUPPLIED. The soil which is tilled, the vegetable substances which that soil produces, the minerals which are dug from it, are all of God. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

II. THE FACULTIES OF BODY AND MIND WHICH SUCH PERSONS EXERCISE AND EMPLOY ARE ENTRUSTED BY THE CREATOR. The limbs of the body, the strength of the muscles, the skill of the intelligent and designing mind, are all needed for the production of the results. Every artificer is himself a miracle of creative power and wisdom; and he who framed the workman is glorified in the handiwork.

III. THE WELFARE OF CIVILIZED HUMAN SOCIETY, WHICH IS THE CONSEQUENCE OF SUCH LABOURS, IS A PART OF THE DIVINE PLAN. The arts, useful and aesthetic,

tend to the comfort and the development of humanity. All the conveniences of human life are instrumental in furthering the purposes of God.

IV. AMONG SUCH ARTIFICERS RELIGION OFTEN FINDS WARM ADHERENTS, SUPPORTERS, AND PROMULGATORS. The busy and useful classes of society furnish the largest proportion of strength to our Churches. These have often been the salt of society, when the wealthy, luxurious, and dissolute on the one hand, and the idle and predatory on the other, would have introduced corruption and death into the body politic.—T.

Ver. 33.—*Dwellings and genealogies.* In many instances the chronicler records not only the names of the families of Israel, but the places where they were settled in fixed habitations. When the land of Canaan was conquered, it was parcelled out among the several tribes. In this way family relationships and sentiment were closely connected with territorial possession. Even certain households were attached to estates and villages. And as the Hebrews were an agricultural and pastoral people, it was natural that they should cherish an hereditary regard for the lands tilled by their fathers. The sons of Simeon transmitted to their posterity certain cities and villages. "These were their habitations, and their genealogy."

I. A LOCAL HABITATION IS DIVINELY APPOINTED AND SANCTIONED. There are many who, as travellers and explorers, as soldiers and seamen, etc., may serve society without having any fixed abode; and homelessness may be profitable discipline in youth. But, generally speaking, a *home* is the best sphere of labour, the best pledge of diligence, the best guarantee of responsibility; and it is well for those who, from generation to generation, can retain the same feelings towards an ancestral abode.

II. FAMILY REGISTERS AND PEDIGREES, IN CONNECTION WITH SUCH DWELLING-PLACES, ARE OF UNDOUBTED SERVICE. The public census, the domestic register, the family tree, the civil and ecclesiastical registration of births, deaths, and marriages, are all valuable. They may be abused by pride, but they are more likely to foster humiliation. They are useful for civil purposes, contributive to family feeling, promotive of patriotism. The squire, the yeoman, the labourer, are all susceptible to the influence of hereditary feeling and local associations.

III. RELIGION DEALS WITH HOMES AND HOUSEHOLDS. Certain places and certain families have been noticeable and memorable for piety. And true religion is not content to deal with the individual; it seeks to leave families with its influence, and to penetrate villages, cities, and nations with its light and spiritual power and grace.—T.

Ver. 38.—"Princes in their families." Words transferred from one language, and one state of society to another, are often misleading. By "princes" here we are to understand head-men of certain towns which were in possession of families among the Simeonites. They were persons of importance, of consideration, and influence in their localities. The record of them bears witness to a settled state of society, and to the establishment of civil order and subordination.

I. HUMAN AUTHORITY IS OF DIVINE APPOINTMENT. That this is so in the family will be admitted by all who believe in a Creator, and in his interest in the human race. It is also admitted by thoughtful persons with regard to civil and national life. It does not follow that rulers are always righteous, or are even always to be tolerated and obeyed. It is an absurd inference to draw from the fact that sovereignty and submission in some form are of Divine appointment—that kings have nothing to do but to command, and subjects nothing but to obey. The world has had enough of absolute monarchy, and theologians have too long inculcated "the right Divine of kings to govern wrong." Still, "the powers that be are ordained of God;" it was divinely intended that men should live in civil society, and that order should be maintained and authority upheld, and justice administered between man and man.

II. AS A CONSEQUENCE, SUBJECTION TO CIVIL AUTHORITY IS, WITHIN CERTAIN LIMITS, A HUMAN DUTY. In ordinary cases, where conscience does not enjoin the express contrary, men are bound to obey the laws of the land. Especially is this the case where, as in our own country, the government is constitutional, and the people have power to amend unjust and inexpedient laws, and to reform abuses in administration. The immoral character of lawful governors is no religious ground of resistance to their decrees.

III. RULERS, SMALL AND GREAT, ARE THEMSELVES ACCOUNTABLE TO HIM WHO IS "THE

BLESSED AND ONLY POTENTATE, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Let them remember this, and be wise and just.—T.

Ver. 40.—"Fat pasture." This passage relates an expedition of certain Simeonite chiefs and their followers, which took place in the days of Hezekiah. The tribe of Simeon was restless and warlike. This exploit was performed, apparently, from selfish, rapacious motives. The Simeonites wanted more pasture for their flocks, and, finding just what suited them in a territory possessed by their neighbours, they invaded their fertile and peaceful valley, slew the inhabitants, and seized their lands for their own use. What circumstances may have justified or extenuated such a proceeding we are not told.

I. PLENTY IS A DIVINE GIFT. The land itself is the gift of God. Its favourable situation, its chemical constituents, the sunshine and the moisture, which make up its fertility,—all are from him, and are proofs of his creative wisdom and goodness. The flocks and herds, and their increase, are his, whose are "the cattle upon a thousand hills." When the valleys are covered over with corn, when the sheep bleat in the pastures, when there is abundant provision for man and beast, then let our hearts ascend in gratitude to him who "openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing."

II. PLENTY HAS MANY ADVANTAGES. In communities which are abundantly supplied with the necessities and comforts of life, there is opportunity and leisure for the cultivation of arts and learning, there is stimulus for commerce and manufactures, there is capacity for benevolence and for evangelization. If it is well used, plenty is a blessing. Only let all things be received as immediately from God's hand, and be regarded as a sacred trust to be used for his glory and in his service.

III. PLENTY IS NOT WITHOUT ITS DANGERS. It was foreseen that when Israel quitted the wilderness, and entered upon possession of the land flowing with milk and honey, there would be a temptation to forget God, and to take credit for national prosperity and wealth. Against the perils of plenty and prosperity, let the fortunate and happy be ever on their guard.—T.

Vers. 9, 10.—*A model prayer.* Of the man *Jabez* we have only this brief record. He is only known by his prayer. Yet the prayer is a sufficient revelation of the man. His character is revealed in it, as is the character of every man to him who is able to read man's prayers aright. His name means "He causes pain," and it was attached to him on account of his mother's sufferings at his birth; but it is designed to seal a certain gentleness, lack of vigour and self-assertion, and almost melancholy tone, which characterized his whole life. From the occurrence of the same name in ch. ii. 55, it has been assumed that this Jabez was the founder of the schools of colleges of the scribes. The date at which he lived cannot be fixed with certainty. Possibly the sorrow of Jabez's birth was, that his mother lost her husband when she gained her son. If so, she might well name her fatherless boy "Sorrowful." Yet he rose above the sadness of his birth; he belied his very name by becoming more honourable than his brethren. The shadow which had fallen upon his birth was dispelled by the uprightness, the nobility, the God-fearing, the prayerful spirit of his life. And God made to rest on him gracious signs of his acceptance. Regarding the prayer as giving indications of the character of Jabez, we may see—

I. THAT JAREZ WAS HUMBLE. Estimate the tone of the prayer. He has such a sense of personal helplessness, and such a trembling fear of responsibility, that he asks for guidance and keeping, and the true enrichment of the Divine blessing. He prays for strength, preservation, success, and blessing, as though a very deep sense of his own weakness and insufficiency rested upon him. Such "humility" is the marked feature of every truly good and great and wise man; and it is sure to find its fullest expression when, for purposes of prayer, he goes into the presence of God. Illustrate from Abraham's intercession for Sodom, Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, and Daniel's and Nehemiah's prayers for their nation. And, combined with other characteristics, the same "humility" is found in our Lord's great intercessory prayer; and we know that it was a marked and striking feature of his beautiful life. Such "humility" is a first and

essential characteristic of acceptable prayer; and the attitude of kneeling is the bodily expression of it.

II. THAT JABEZ WAS INTELLIGENT AND THOUGHTFUL. The prayer shows that he had formed a sensible estimate of life. To him it was a scene of toil and struggle and evil; it seemed to be full of work, duties, responsibilities, cares, and trusts; and for it all he recognized the need of a guiding and upholding hand. Illustrate by our Lord's figure of the man who proposed to build, sitting down first and *counting the cost*. The man may discover no need for prayer who rushes heedlessly into life, only intending to do the best he can under the various circumstances that may arise. But he who looks thoughtfully out over life, and intelligently anticipates its duties and cares, will be sure to feel the importance and helpfulness of prayer, and, with Jabez, will turn to God, saying, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" Compare Moses praying, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence;" and Joshua's resolve, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

III. THAT JABEZ WAS, IN A GOOD SENSE, AMBITIOUS. His piety did not crush down the high imaginations and glowing hopes of his young heart. He prays God to help him "enlarge his coast," or landed estate; to extend his possessions, to increase his wealth, and to advance his influence. Religion seeks to sanctify our ambitions, but not to crush them. We may pray to God about our plans and schemes for worldly advancement, if only we keep the spirit of full loyalty to God and submission to his will; and to pray freely and constantly about our common human affairs is the best way to ensure our winning and keeping the right spirit whatever we may attain.

IV. THAT JABEZ WAS HAPPY. In spite of the melancholy tone that was on him; in spite of the sorrow clinging to him from his birth. This ensures our happiness—the accomplishment of our life-aims, when those aims are right ones. "God granted Jabez that which he requested." He had: 1. *Success in life given him*, so that he might add field to field, and become "more honourable than his brethren." 2. *Evil warded off from him*. In "going out and coming in," the preserving hand of God kept him safe. 3. *God's blessing sanctifying his successes*; by that term meaning the satisfying and comforting sense of the Divine approval and acceptance. It may be impressed that such a prayer indicates the *personal piety* of Jabez, and suggests that he made a full consecration of himself to the God of his fathers *in early life*. Plead for such a whole-hearted decision, and such a spirit of prayerfulness, on the very threshold of life. It is well if, before the foot falls on the first step of life, the heart goes up to God, saying, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!"—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*Othniel's adventure; or, the impulse of promised rewards.* For the story, see Josh. xv. 16, 17; Judg. i. 12, 13; iii. 9. The point of the narrative, for the sake of which it is preserved, appears to be this: Othniel acted, vigorously and successfully, under the impulse of offered reward. The daughter of one so honoured as Caleb was a prize indeed worth winning, and she was to be given to the man who, by his valour and skill, could take the city of Kirjath-sepher. Compare the offer of reward which David made on the occasion of the siege of Jerusalem (ch. xi. 6). Some interest attaches to Kirjath-sepher as meaning the "Book-town," and suggesting the existence of a literature at that time among the Canaanites. Its earlier name (*Debir*, oracle) may indicate that it was a national sanctuary where the national records were preserved; and, if so, we may be sure that it was securely walled and stoutly defended. The incident may be used to introduce the consideration of the appropriateness of offering rewards, as an incentive to the doing of duty, and in the higher spheres of morals and religion, where all the quality of actions must depend on the *motives* for which they find expression. In relation to the education and training of the young, the subject of rewards is frequently discussed; some urging that childhood needs the help to effort and perseverance which may be found in the promise of reward; while others contend that a child is deteriorated, and led to adopt false sentiments for life, who is impelled to exertion by the hope of what is to be gained by it, and not to act or to abstain from acting because the thing required is *right*. It may, however, be fairly contended that, besides the proper and high motives of *duty* and *right*, we may thankfully accept the aid of auxiliary motives, and that among these may be set in a first place the *promise and the hope of reward*. But it would seem to settle the question, that we can

show so fully how God has been pleased—in lesser spheres and in greater, in temporal affairs and in spiritual, throughout all the long ages—to use the impulse of rewards. This may be fully and impressively illustrated in the Bible story; and of the character of the illustrations we give a few suggestive instances. 1. In the first trial of humanity it was distinctly understood that the maintenance of all that was gathered up in Paradise was the reward of obedience. 2. To Abraham God offered himself, in his personal favour, and in his power to guide and bless, as “his exceeding great Reward,” and even Abraham’s faith and loyalty were upheld by the promise that in his “seed all nations of the earth should be blessed.” 3. Israel was helped to endure the rigours of Egypt, and to make a great stand for liberty, under the assurance of a great reward, even the heritage of the land that flowed with milk and honey. And it has often been pointed out that temporal prosperity in Canaan was distinctly offered as the reward of obedience to the Law. 4. The prophets—as may be most impressively seen in Isaiah—held before the people most glowing visions of coming days as the sure reward of a full and hearty national return to Jehovah. 5. Our Lord himself fitted the impulse of reward into his most gracious invitation, “Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest.” 6. The apostles urge the disciples to all earnestness in the Christian life and labour, by the assurance that we run for an “incorruptible crown,” and may hope to receive a “crown of glory, that fadeth not away.” Our last sight of Christ in the Word presents him as saying, “Behold, I come quickly; and *my reward* is with me.” We may, then, use the promise of rewards; they appeal to sentiments and feelings in us that are good and useful. We may magnify the grace of God in even *thus* helping us to win “the holy.” And we may reasonably expect *present*, and certainly look for *future*, gracious rewards of obedience and faithfulness.—R. T.

Vers. 21-23.—The dignity of all work. These verses set before us the interesting fact that God recognizes a man’s occupation, and knows precisely his sphere and his work. Another striking illustration of the precision of the Divine knowledge, and the observation even of a man’s handicraft, is found in Acts x 5, 6, where God gives these minute directions: “Send men to *Joppa*, and call for one *Simon*, whose *surname* is *Peter*; he *lodgeth* with one *Simon*, a *tinner*, whose *house* is *by the seaside*.” In these verses different occupations are honourably mentioned; some wrought fine linen; others were potters and gardeners and hedgers; and so is suggested to us the honourableness and usefulness of all kinds of work. There was no such sentiment among the Jews as unhappily prevails in all so-called highly civilized countries, that there is a kind of degradation in having to work for your own living. Every Jewish boy was required to learn a trade, and the greatest rabbis preserved their dignity and learning along with service to the community in some humble occupation. Consider—

I. WORK AS A CONDITION OF HUMAN LIFE ON THE EARTH. If there is one law more absolute for mankind than another, it is that they shall *work*. They are set in this earth-garden, as Adam was in Paradise, to win it, to use its forces, to dress it, to keep it. For “work” man is endowed. He has muscles with the needed physical strength, and hands with the needed physical skill, and brains with the needed guidance and control. And he is in the midst of conditions that demand work; the earth will only yield her stores and her increase in response to man’s work. If a man “will not work,” then the law God has put into the very creation of the earth is, that “he shall not eat.” And this work-condition is designed by God to bear directly on man’s *moral* training. Only by and through work can character grow and unfold. Toil is testing and trial, out of which alone can virtue be born. So all work is noble and holy.

II. WORK AS A CONDITION OF CIVILIZED LIFE. Here its simplicity is lost. It becomes a diversified and complicated thing. As men live together in cities a thousand fresh wants, real and fancied, become created, and trades are multiplied for the supply of the thousand wants. Work is divided and subdivided; sometimes it seems a higher kind, and sometimes a lower. While some must work by hand, others are called forth to work by voice, and pen, and brush, and chisel, and brain. Thousands must toil in various ways to supply the necessities of life, and tens of thousands must toil to supply the ever-increasing demand for luxuries. And so, in civilized times, work seems too often to grow into man’s curse; and he toils at sweat of brain as well as of face; and spends strength and health and life in winning bread from those who “are sump-

tuously every day, and are clothed in purple and fine linen ; " and we cannot greatly wonder that men should grow hard, and lose the high and inspiring thought of the " dignity of work."

III. THE ONE CONDITION THAT LIFTS ALL HUMAN TOIL INTO DIGNITY. Its usefulness to others. It must be done " not unto self." And so God has " set the solitary in families," and put fathers and mothers under the pressure of family responsibility, that in toiling for others they may win the joy of work. Illustrate from the artist, the poet, etc., and see how the condition may apply to all workers.

IV. THE YET HIGHER CONDITION WHICH SETS WORK IN ITS TRUE PLACE. It must be done as service to God. Then work bears upon the culture of religious character, and becomes a stepping-stone upward to the heavenly. Character is both exhibited and cultured by it; and no kind of occupation can be regarded as mean into which *character can be put, and by which others may be served, and God may be glorified.* Potters, gardeners, hedgers, and workers in fine linen may all win the " Well done, good and faithful." —R. T.

Vers. 39—41.—*Might and right.* The place named *Gedor* is not otherwise mentioned in Scripture. Ewald and Bertheau think *Gérar* is the true reading; and this is given in the Septuagint Version. Reference, then, is to a portion of the Philistine country, which was remarkable for its fertility (Gen. xxvi. 6—12; 2 Chron. xiv. 14, 15). We cannot tell whether these princes had any justifiable ground for their aggression. But we may dwell on this as an instance of " might " mastering " right;" for the earlier occupiers may be fairly considered to have had the " right," and the point of the story is that these princes grew strong, and when they had " might " they used it to drive out, and possess the lands of, those who had only " right." The Eastern mode of keeping flocks by moving them to different parts of wide pasture-grounds should be explained, and the rivalry and the quarrelling which this too often entails may be illustrated in the relations of Abraham and Lot. And the way in which weakening and decaying tribes have to yield before strong and rising tribes and nations, may illustrate the modern doctrine of the " survival of the fittest;" and instances may be found in the story of the great nations, such as Persia, Greece, Rome, etc.

I. MAN'S MIGHT IS OFTEN THOUGHT RIGHT. The two things are perfectly distinct. What we *can* do is not necessarily what we *ought* to do. And man's power must ever be held down under the mastery of a will guided by good judgment, right principles, sweet charity, and tender consideration for the claims and rights of others. The Nasmyth steam-hammer affords a good illustration of splendid *power* held in full control. Yet in the commoner spheres of life, as well as by kings and great men, might is often mistaken for right. It is often one of the easiest pieces of self-deception. One of the master principles swaying men is the *love of power*. Therefore do men get large numbers of servants, retainers, and workmen; they increase wealth and possessions; push into places of position and influence; and in every possible way seek to gain sway over their fellow-men. And this becomes a peril, and, for many men, the severest test of virtue and charity. Every true-hearted man will feel the peril of confusing might with right; and will accept the fact that these two will often be in conflict, and that, for such conflict, the issue must always be the triumph of the right. Man's might is a fatal force for the liberty of his fellow-man, unless it not only seems to be to him, but it *actually is*, the same as the right. So the practical question ever and again recurring in life is this: "I can, but may I? Will it be right?" Man's nobility is full loyalty to the right.

II. GOD'S RIGHT ALWAYS PROVES TO BE MIGHT. Always "in the long run." We make many mistakes by only seeing *pieces* and *parts* of things; so we sometimes say, "The way of the Lord is *not equal*." Yet right does always triumph, if we can properly discern the "right," and properly appraise "triumph." Right is invincible. Nature, all the good there is in the earth, all the long ages, and God himself, are on the side of the right. This is true for the individual man when, in all simplicity and loyalty, he does God's right, whatever of seeming disunities it may involve. He may have the most perfect confidence that God will make it might, and in the due time "bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noonday." It may be practically enforced that man's violence overreaches itself, as did *Haman's*.

And that all *forcings* of his way and will by man imply a failing of trust in God's living love and lead. It is a spirit in striking contrast with that expressed in Jabez's prayer (ch. iv. 10).—R. T.

Ver. 43.—*God's ways with Amalek.* The reference of the verse is to the remnant that had escaped the great slaughter under King Saul (1 Sam. xv. 7, 8). Indications of the existence of scattered portions of this people may be found in 1 Sam. xxvii. 8; xxx. 1; 2 Sam. viii. 12. The Amalekites are first mentioned in connection with the aggressive expedition of Chedorlaomer (Gen. xiv. 7). They occupied the country between Palestine, Idumæa, and Mount Sinai, on the elevated plateau now called *Er-Rakhmah*. They were a nomad people, and their towns were but collections of tents; they were rich in flocks and herds, and seem to have acquired a vast power by their bold predatory habits. They were consequently most dangerous neighbours for Israel to have so close upon their borders. For the Scripture references to the Amalekites, see Exod. xvii. 8—16; Deut. xxv. 17—19; Numb. xiv. 40—45; xxiv. 20; Judg. iii. 13; vi. 3—5; xii. 15.

I. THE SIN OF AMALEK. This is distinctly stated in 1 Sam. xv. 2: "I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he *laid wait* for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt." The expressions used appear to indicate some peculiar *treachery* in the conduct of this tribe. Probably they regarded themselves as having the sole right to the pasture-grounds in the valleys and plains of the higher ranges of Sinai, and so thought to cut off the advancing hosts of Israel, by taking them in detail as they toiled through the several passes. It may also be urged that the knowledge of the deliverance through the Red Sea had spread among the tribes of the desert; it declared this people to be under Jehovah's lead, and increased the responsibility of all who attempted to hinder their progress. Amalek added to its sin by incursions in the time of the judges, and by constant annoyance, which in part may explain the severe manner in which it was dealt with. The principle of the treatment of Amalek's sin may be illustrated by our Lord's words, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea."

II. THE DIVINE JUDGMENT ON AMALEK. Remarkable for its severity. Explain that the *form* and *degree* of Divine judgments must fit into the customs and sentiments of each age, if they are to exert the proper moral influence upon the age. The extermination of a race was not regarded in Saul's time as, with our Christian sentiments, we should regard it now. Human life is less valued in the East, and tribal, dynastic, and national changes have always been more sudden, frequent, and violent. Still, this would be, even in those days, so severe a judgment as to prove a solemn warning to the *wilful* who would try to force their own will against God.

III. MAN'S EXECUTION OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT. It is of the utmost importance, for the due understanding of Old Testament Scripture, that God may use any of his creatures as agents in carrying out his judicial sentences; and *man* may be his *executioner* as well as plague, famine, or tempest. In such case what the man has to do for God is right, and the man only comes under the judgments of God for the *spirit* and the *way* in which he does it. Saul is not judged for slaying the Amalekites, but for not *executing his commission fully and faithfully*.

IV. MAN'S FAILURE IN EXECUTING THE DIVINE JUDGMENTS. Distinguish between man the *agent*, and man the *individual*. God looks upon the man, and treats with him in both ways. Man's *trusts* from God become *tests* of man for God. And it may be that the more complicated and difficult the trust is, the more satisfactory it may prove as a moral test. Man is honoured in being permitted to carry out God's plans and purposes. He may even, from the gospel standpoint, be a "co-worker together with God." But God will not fail to carry out his plans to perfection, even when men may seem to fail him.—R. T.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The prayer of Jabez.* "Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called him Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me

from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested." But little is known of this man; known in his generation as a *man of prayer*; famous for the directness and simplicity of his appeal to God and for the success attending it. Probably he gave his name to Jabez, the town mentioned in ch. ii. 55, as Beth-lehem, Ephratah, Tekoa, and many named in these genealogies did. If so—and the identity of several names in the respective genealogies, and the singular eminence and honour of the man, give great weight to supposition—then we know something of his ancestry and something of his descendants. Of his ancestry; for then ch. ii. 55 makes him a Kenite, and a descendant of Jonadab the son of Rechab, one of the early sect described in ch. xxxv., who, probably called into existence by the testimony of Elijah, cultivated simplicity of creed, rejecting all idolatry; simplicity of life, dwelling in tents; simplicity of food, drinking neither wine nor strong drink. A sect ready to help Jehu in his reformation (2 Kings xi. 15, 16); respected by those who could not copy them; blessed and honoured by God. And we know something of his descendants; for he was in that case the founder of the school of scribes, who did so much in the later centuries of Jewish national history to revive and maintain the purer worship of God. A sect of married monks, whose only vow was simplicity of life, they seemed to exemplify all the advantages derivable from special callings, consecration, and brotherhood, while free from all their defects. Their earnest faith turned them to the Bible as the best preservative of a people from error. And their simple tent-life gave them leisure. Probably Jabez was a sort of William Tyndale of his generation, bent on giving his people the Bible in their homes. Tyndale by translation, Jabez merely by transcription, both gave the priceless treasure to multitudes who before had lacked it. Assuming these things, there are some lessons from his character and from his prayer that are worth observing.

I. FIRST, A GOOD SOIL HELPS TO MAKE A GOOD PLANT. In all self-denial there is advantage. Power of will, energy of purpose, security against temptation, are all furthered by it. These early total abstainers had some of the vigour marking the class in all ages. The poet had not in their case to lament that "the days of simple living and high thinking were no more." But there they were. The John the Baptists of their time in simplicity of life and profundity of thought and faith. The home moulds the child. Let your children find in their parents' life purity, brightness, love, and they will more easily copy it. Like as Milton and Cromwell rose among the Puritans, so Jabez rose among the Rechabites. Observe—

II. SOME LIVES BEGIN IN GREAT SORROW THAT LEAVE BEHIND THEM GREAT JOY. What the mother's grief was we do not know. It may have been unusual pain and danger at his birth. It may have been (the father is not mentioned) that she lost her husband before she bore her child. And the melancholy of her heart made her despair of any brightness, and give her boy (an unfair thing to do) a depressing name. It is possible, too, that some sorrow may have arisen out of this prayer. If it did, we may observe that a dull morning often opens into a bright day. The early life may be obscure, pressed with disadvantages, all uphill, and yet we may reach a stately usefulness and comfort.

"The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars,
But in ourselves."

III. LOOK AT HIS PRAYER. There are many points about it worthy of remark. 1. That whatever touched his life he took it to his God. 2. That he blends in his prayer the requests for moral and the outward mercies which make up well-being. "That thou wouldest bless me indeed," is probably a prayer for highest spiritual mercies; for God's smile, God's grace, forgiveness, peace. "And enlarge my coast." This was prayer for outward advantage. Large lands not needed for their simple living; probably they were needed only for the increasing number of disciples. "That thy hand may be with me" seems again a spiritual petition; a prayer for guidance pre-eminently, and for God's aid. The worldly don't want God's hand with them; it is apt to stop the flow of their purposes and schemes. But the devout want God to be a partner in all their business. "And to keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me." Here is an illusion to his name. And probably the prayer means, "Dismiss point a mother's fears, and let not harm overtake me." In estimating aright the worth of this prayer,

the following suggestion may be of value :—Only those prayers are *vital and real* which, like this, combine requests for outward and inward good. When you pray, say, “Give us daily bread, and forgive us our debts.” If you omit to ask for the bread, you may be pretty sure it is not the greatness of your spirituality that omits the request, but only the littleness of your faith, which makes you imagine God can do nothing so substantial as bless you in your common needs. What is wanted by all of us is *goodness* rather than spirituality, and a religion of common life rather than a strained, unnatural pietism. Jabez had grand faith that God ruled in common life, was lowly enough to bless him, and to help him in his work. Observe, lastly—

IV. THE LORD'S ANSWER. *It came* to him. Came so palpably that all could see it, that it was a matter of history, that it taught others that they had a Friend above, and led them to the throne of grace. Blessed is the circle in which somebody prays! Pray on. You will not need to proclaim the answers you receive; your neighbours will see it for themselves. And your prayer will thus be doubly blessed. It will secure for you the good you desire, and will guide many another to the throne of the heavenly grace, to get there the blessings which they require.—G.

Vers. 9, 10.—*A life and its lessons.* Two verses only relate the life of Jabez, but they suffice to give us some idea of its nature and character; also to convey some lessons for our guidance as we pass through our own.

I. THREE FEATURES OF HIS LIFE. We learn that: 1. It was begun in special sorrow. His mother called him Jabez because she “bare him with sorrow.” Possibly his father had died before his birth, or their estate may have been so reduced as to make another child seem a burden rather than a blessing. 2. It was characterized by special piety. He made his future the subject of earnest prayer to God; he earnestly desired that God would bless him in all his doings, that the Divine hand might be upon him; he evidently believed and felt that all things were ruled and overruled by the Lord himself. He “committed his way unto the Lord.” 3. It was crowned with special peace and honour. “God granted him that which he requested” (ver. 10). He was “more honourable than his brethren”—had a larger estate, was held in higher esteem, attained to greater eminence. God did “keep him from the evil” from which he sought Divine deliverance, and it did “not grieve him.” He did “enlarge his coast.” Peace and honour were his portion in an unusual degree. His life must have had its shadow as well as its sunshine, but it was brighter with earthly honour and less clouded with worldly troubles than are the lives of most men.

II. THE LESSONS WE MAY GLEAN THEREFROM. We learn: 1. That that which has an unpromising beginning may stand among the best. How little did the mother of Jabez imagine that the child of her sorrow would have so honourable a career! The most successful and even glorious enterprise may be begun in weakness and in trembling of heart. That which was once only a small gathering in a back slum has grown into a magnificent and beneficent institution. They that sow in tears may reap in joy. If God prosper a human life or a good cause, its early insignificance will prove of small account. Many a time the widow's child, for whom it has been hard to find food and education, has grown to be a man of weight and honour, filling a large space and doing a great work in the world. 2. That it is right to ask God for material blessings in the hope of obtaining them. These were earthly favours which Jabez asked for, and which he received of God—enlargement of his estate, immunity from trouble and loss, etc. We have no authority for asking God for wealth or immunity from sorrow with a *positive assurance* that we shall have those things. We do not know that they will suit us; it is quite possible, or even probable, that they would prove the very worst things we could have. But we may ask God for temporal blessings, in the hope of receiving them, if we ask *in a subject spirit*, desiring him to withhold from us what he knows it would be best to keep back. We *are to* pray for daily bread; that “his hand may be with us;” that he will be with us in our going out and our coming in. 3. That God is never served in vain. God granted Jabez that which he requested. He may not give us our heart's desires in the form in which we cherish them. The “cup” did not “pass from” the Saviour, but he “was heard in that he feared” (Heb. v. 7). God has ways of blessing us of which we have little thought when we are on our knees. But if we ask we *shall have*—if not sooner, later; if not in our way, in his better way.—G.

Vers. 11—43.—*General truths from genealogical tables.* Reading lessons from this list of names, we gather—

I. THAT OBSCURITY IS BETTER THAN PROMINENCE FOR MOST OF US. In this long table we have one or two celebrated men, such as Caleb (ver. 15) and Othniel (ver. 13), but most of them are men of no repute. We only know their names and their relationship to those that preceded and followed them. It is a mere truism to say that the generality of men must spend their lives in obscurity, that it is only a few who can be conspicuous. But it is a truth worth treasuring, that lowness of position is far better for most of us than elevation would be. But few men can bear distinction without spiritual deterioration. The graces which the Master most loves to see (and those which are most acceptable to man also) flourish in the quiet valley far better than on the lofty mountain. If God ordain prominence, “Be not high-minded, but fear.” If obscurity be our portion, let us say with the psalmist, “Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty,” etc. (Ps. cxxxii. 1). Let us not be envious of the exalted, but rather be thankful that we are not exposed to their peculiar perils.

“He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride.”

II. THAT GOD PUTS HONOUR ON THE USEFUL ARTS. It is specially mentioned of some “that they were craftsmen;” of others that they were members of the “house of them that wrought fine linen” (ver. 21). It is significant enough that, in this brief recital, these two industries should have honourable mention. We should feel that when we cut and carve, when we spin and weave, when we are occupied in manufactures, when we are turning, by industry and knowledge, the materials around us into objects of service and of beauty, we are not only “making money,” enriching our nation, gratifying human tastes, we are also fulfilling the will of God concerning us, we are doing that for which he placed us here; and we should engage in all useful arts as in his sight, serving him in all our labour.

III. THAT CONTENTED INDUSTRY IS BETTER THAN SUCCESSFUL VIOLENCE. Two instances are given at the close of the chapter (vers. 39—41, 42, 43) of appropriation by violence. The sons of Simeon took forcible possession of “fat pasture and good,” where “the land was wide, and quiet, and peaceable;” they established themselves there by “utterly destroying” the inhabitants. Others of them (ver. 42) repeated the same deed of violence. Possibly they may have been justified in their act by commands which were binding, or by a permission which was sufficient. Probably they satisfied their own conscience, and wrought their work without compunction. But we read with far greater pleasure of the craftsmen who gave their name to the valley by their industry (ver. 14), and of those who “wrought fine linen,” and of those engaged in simple agriculture (ver. 23), and thus gained a peaceful, honourable livelihood. Feats of arms are brilliant things in their way, but beneath the surface are heartrending injuries, and long after they are performed comes a series of sorrows. The industry and energy which work no injury to the conscience, and which carry benefit and comfort in their train, are immeasurably to be preferred to “the pomp and circumstance of war.”

IV. THAT IT IS WISE TO CONSIDER OURSELVES IN THE LIGHT IN WHICH WE LOOK AT OTHERS. The chronicler remarks, shortly but significantly, “These are ancient things” (ver. 22). The events of his “modern” time are now very much more “ancient” to us than those old times of which he was writing were to his generation. We stand in the graveyard, and the sloping, timeworn tombstones speak to our hearts of the distant days in which once lived the generation beneath our feet. The day will come when we shall be separated by the same breadth of time from the living men that will then be walking where we sleep. We shall soon be nothing to the world but the people of a day that is passed. 1. How great is the folly of men who own no treasure but that of this transient time! 2 How true the wisdom of those whose portion no graveyard will hold, who in the far hereafter will live with God, and be rich with the wealth of Heaven (Rev. ii. 15—17)!—C.

Ver. 9.—Jabez: his history. Supposed to be the son of Kenaz, and an eminent doctor of the law, whose reputation drew around him so many scribes and learned men that a town was called by his name (see ch. ii. 55). We have seen the pre-eminence

given to the tribe of Judah on account of its connection with the promised Christ. Before tracing further the genealogy of the sons of Israel, an entire chapter is devoted to the family of David. This is just as it should be—still further prominence being given to every one and everything that foreshadowed the true David, the Lord Jesus Christ. The line of David is drawn all through the third chapter, through a succession of good and bad monarchs. The Lord's eye is on his beloved Son; and the stream that leads to him winds its way through wastes and stagnant pools and dark morasses lying on either side—everything marked which in any way stands connected with it, but beyond this as unworthy of notice. We can now devote attention to one of God's children in particular, and recorded in this chapter—Jabez. In the midst of a genealogy of some extent, the Spirit of God singles one out for notice, and lingers over it with delight. It is a bright gem on an apparently hard and uninteresting surface shining with brilliancy. It is a name, however, fully confirming all we have hitherto referred to. It would have no notice in the inspired Word but for what there is of God in it. We know much of God in Jabez, very little of who or what he was. Of what he was in relation to the world, in relation to his fellow-men, or to society, or to business, we know little. Of what he was to God there is much said and much known. What matters the rest? We may be sure *that* was all right. For if men are right towards Christ we may take the rest for granted. It is this that gave Jabez a name in heaven. This made him worthy of a record in the Book of God. But for this he would have been unnoticed and unknown. And what is said of him? "Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow." God's sorrowing ones are generally God's more honourable ones. It is through sorrow we reach our joys. "Ye now therefore have sorrow, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." It is God's order—sorrow the portal to joy. The darkness first, then the light; tribulation here, then the kingdom; discipline here, then the glory. God's secret place is darkness. The pavilion round about him are "dark waters and thick clouds"—the dark waters of sorrow, the thick clouds of baffling enigma and unfathomable mystery. But inside this pavilion of darkness and cloud there is always a brightness (Ps. xviii. 11, 12). This brightness is the unchanging love of him who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." Under his shadow the dark waters and thick clouds will all in due time disperse. Yes, every thick cloud and every dark water-flood will melt before his love, who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Before the air can be cleared and the calm stillness of nature be felt, the thunder-clouds must gather and the lightning-flash be seen. The stillness of nature comes heralded by tokens of terror. It is the order of God, both in nature and grace. We see the darkness first, and call it "Jabez." We meet with bereavement and write "Jabez" upon it, though God makes it a blessed means of drawing us to fix our affections on a world that can never pass away. We meet with disappointment and vexation and worry, and write "Jabez" upon one thing after another. Yet all these things come out, in the wonder-working of God's providence, in the deep riches of his grace, as dealings "more honourable," as blessings in disguise. They are the discipline of his hand, bringing glory to him and blessing to our own souls.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."

And what is the prominent feature in the character of this man of God noticed by the Holy Spirit? It is prayer. "And Jabez called upon the God of Israel." Jabez was a man of prayer. In this aspect he is first presented to us. Oh that this was the marked feature in us all! A man of prayer means a man blessed of God. A man of prayer means, in its truest sense, a man of God. It means a marked man—one distinguished from others by communion with God, and carrying that mark about him in all his least and greatest acts. This is the man on whom the Holy Spirit loves to linger, and singles him out from a mere mass of genealogies that have nothing worthy of notice, and holds him before us for a moment as the one "whom the King delighteth to honour." But on whom did Jabez call? Not on God; not on abstract deity; not

on some "unknown God"—some almighty abstraction whom we are for ever groping after, but whom we can never know. No; this is the atheist's god, the Socinian's god, the rationalist's god, the god of all men who know not God in *Christ*. Jabez knew better. He "called on the God of *Israel*"—the *covenant* God, the God of his *fathers* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The saints of the Old Testament had one expression with regard to God which corresponded exactly with the expression used by the saints of the New Testament. The latter knew God as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," the former knew God as the "God of *Israel*," the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." And these two meant exactly the same. The God in *covenant*, and keeping that covenant for ever; the God who called his people out of the idolatry of heathenism; who "accounts" them righteous before him; who separates them from the world to be his people; who loves them, and keeps them, and causes them to inherit the land; and who does all this, not because of their *deservings*, but because of his own rich mercy. *This* is the "God of *Israel*," the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And Jabez knew *this* God. He addressed him as One with whom he is *familiar*; he values his blessing above all others; he feels the need of his "hand," his presence, continually; he feels the need of being "kept," and feels that God only can keep him; he feels his own liability to evil, and casts himself, in the conviction of his weakness, upon him. Oh, surely Jabez was no *ordinary* child of God!—W.

Ver. 10.—*Jabez's prayer.* I. Mark the first line of his prayer: "Oh that thou wouldest BLESS ME INDEED!" He needs the blessing of his covenant God. He pleads for it. He pleads earnestly. It is *real* prayer. It is *such* prayer God hears, *such* prayer he *loves* to hear and to answer. But oh! there is many a blessing which may not be a blessing "*indeed*." Of this Jabez is aware. He asks not for a blessing, but a blessing *indeed*—for that which will be a *real* blessing. He asks not for that which may come in the form of a blessing and in the end prove a curse. He asks for that to come which will be a real, permanent, abiding blessing. "Let it come in what shape it may. That, Lord, I leave to thee. Let it come in darkness or in light, in suffering and sorrow or in health and gladness, in the abundance of wealth or the desolation of poverty—any way as best may seem to thee, Lord; only let it be a blessing to me, a blessing '*indeed*.'" Ah, this is prayer, and the right sort of prayer. There was something like it, only in an infinitely higher degree, in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Father, thy will be done." There was just this difference between the Son of God in the bosom of the Father and those who are sons of God only by *adoption*. He did not need the strengthening angel from heaven to give him that submission of will. It was not till *after* that submission the angel appeared to strengthen him. The angel was sent, not to produce submission of spirit, but for the weakness of the body, and to carry out the work of redemption. His holy soul was always submissive. It was his nature to be so. With us, however, it is different. We need the strengthening angel to help us to submission to the Father's will as well as to do the work of God. Our nature is essentially rebellious. We require the discipline of God's hand to bring us to submit. His holy soul was submission itself. There is a passage in the New Testament which corresponds exactly with this distinction I have drawn in the prayer of Jabez between a blessing and a blessing "*indeed*." Our Lord said to the Jews (John viii. 31, 32), "If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples *indeed*; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." It is one thing to be a "disciple," it is another to be a "disciple *indeed*." Many were "disciples" in our Lord's time; how few were the "disciples *indeed*!" Many followed him, but from what motives? How few "*continued* in the Word," "*knew* the truth" with that deeper knowledge of the heart, and were "*made free*" by that knowledge—"free" from the bondage of guilt and sin, "free" from the power of sin over their lives, "free" from all that which they felt was contrary to the glory of God! Ah, how little of *this* freedom there may be with all our discipleship! This is what it is to be a "disciple *indeed*." This is what it is to be "blessed *indeed*." Reader, are you a "disciple *indeed*?"

II. Mark the next petition: "And wouldest ENLARGE MY COAST." Probably the coast which he prays may be enlarged was some *earthly* possession. He speaks as one who had to recover from the hand of the enemy his portion of the promised land. For the recovery of this he was about to engage in war. And what a spiritual lesson we learn

from it! It is by conflict the child of God obtains more and more of the blessings laid up for him in Christ. The Word of the Lord is to him what it was to Israel of old: "Go ye up and *possess* the land;" "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." Oh, what blessings are laid up for us in Christ! Why do we not enter into our inheritance? God has indeed "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," but have we *possessed* them? Have we drunk deep of these wells of living waters? Are our souls living upon the riches that are hid in Christ for us? Why do we not possess the land which Jesus has won for us? Because, dear reader, there is no conflict. We must fight to enjoy. We must know what it is, hour after hour, to engage in conflict—yes, in a bloody conflict—with the world, the flesh, and the devil. We must grapple hour after hour with flesh and blood—with "the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." We must know keenly what it is to pluck out a *right* eye, and cut off a *right* hand or a *right* foot. We must know the struggle with sloth and indulgence, with natural inclinations and desires, with unholiness, with harsh tempers, and unkind words, and a fault-finding spirit. Have we entered into, are we daily engaged in, a conflict like this? Ah, you will never be a "disciple *indeed*" unless you know something of this agony. It is through conflict, through warring a good warfare, that God opens the floodgates of the soul for all the treasures of his grace to flow in. You may know them and talk about them; but have you *possessed* the good land? Is it not true that "there remaineth yet"—yes, *yet* after all these years of Christian discipleship—"very much land to be possessed"? Oh! no warfare, no conflict, no struggle; then no deep joy, no sweet peace, no uplifting communion with God, no realized sweetness of the Word, no real growth in grace, no likeness to Christ. Jabez's coat would never have been enlarged without a deadly struggle with the foe. There will be no enlargement of coat with *you*, Christian, without this. It is thus we see it in the Lord's address to the seven Churches. Every promise is made there not to the Christian as such, not to the disciple, but "to him that *overcometh*." They are made to the "disciple *indeed*"—to the one who knows something not only of what it is to fight, but to win. Yes, Christian, your soul has been saved by Christ's finished work; but every inch of the ground *beyond* must be fought for. You will pass into God's presence a *naked* soul—just saved. Where are the laurels you have won? Where is the ground around you bedewed with your tears from struggling in prayer? Where is the inward struggle against indolence and sloth, against yielding to natural inclination, against a censorious spirit, against some unkind word at your fireside, against some light or frivolous thought? Where is the holy anxiety to redeem time for God? Where is the agony and bloody sweat against temptation and sin? Where is the soul's inward yearning after God? Where is the surrender to him hour after hour—the full consecration of self and all things to his glory? Oh, this is the warfare with the foe; and the man who knows something of this alone knows what it is to have "enlargement of coat." Precious prayer! Lord, "enlarge my coat"! Make more room in my heart, in my life, for thee! I am so narrow, so cramped, so straitened, so wretchedly *little*! Oh, enlarge this straitened soul of mine! Make more room for thyself in me and in everything about me! Yes, in my time, my pleasures, my duties, my cares, my aims, my household, my children, my servants,—in *all* make more room for thyself! Come, Lord Jesus, "enlarge my coat." And do it *now*! Let me not wait another day, another hour. Reader, are you ready for this? Will you *to-day* make this your prayer? Believe it, you will not be a stranger to the joy of the Lord any longer if you will. Oh, make this your prayer and your aim! "Go ye up and *possess* the land," for "there remaineth yet *very much* land to be possessed."

III. What is the next petition? "That THINE HAND MIGHT BE WITH ME." The hand of God is the *presence* of God. But it is more. It is God in *activity*. It is God in *life* and *power*. It is the psalmist's holy longing: "My soul thirsteth for God, for the *living* God." The hand of God is God in power on our behalf. What was the hand of Jesus? What mighty works were done by it! It touched the leper, and all disease fled. It touched the dead, and made it start into life again. It was laid on a sinking disciple, and held him amid the boiling water-floods. It was laid on a loving disciple who had fallen prostrate before the glory of the Son of man, and it raised him to his feet again, and enabled him to stand in the midst of all the unveiled glories of the *Apocalypse*. Oh, the hand of the God-man Jesus, what power there was in it!

Thus Jabez prays, "That thine hand may be with me." Thus the child of God may ever pray. It is just what we need—him with us in all his glorious power; him to put away our leprous sin; him to raise our dead souls to life; him to uphold our sinking souls amid the storms and tempests of life; him to raise us out of the dust of grovelling earthliness, and make us look into the glory before us; him to bless us; him to do all. "That thine hand may be with me." Reader, it is just what you need—a living Jesus at your side from day to day, and hour to hour.

IV. Mark the concluding petition: "That thou wouldest **KEEP ME FROM EVIL**, that it may not grieve me." Observe, reader, it is not a prayer to be kept from evil. It is a prayer to be kept from the *effects* of evil. "That it may not *grieve* me." "Have we received good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" "Shall there be evil in a city, and I have not done it?" The Christian cannot pray to be delivered from evil. He will have sorrow and suffering and trial here. The eye must often weep over sin; the heart must often mourn over its depravity. Temptation must be constantly endured. But this the soul *may* pray for—that the sin *within* us and the temptations *around* us may not grieve or *hurt* the soul. This he may pray for—that his evil heart may not draw him from God; that an evil nature may not be yielded to; that an evil spirit may not deaden his soul, and leave him cold and heartless to the Saviour and his glory. There is no exemption from evil here. It is in us and around us on every side. But, blessed be God, we have One dwelling within us, even the Holy Spirit, and through his mighty working evil may be turned into a blessing. It is for this we may pray, we *must* pray. Your danger is not in possessing an evil heart, but in yielding to it. Your danger is not on the *verge* of a precipice, but in being unwatchful there. Oh, pray this prayer, Christian reader!—W.

Vers. 31—43.—*The Simeonites.* This tribe is classed with that of Judah, as their possessions were partly taken out of their extensive territory (see Josh. xix. 1). As Simeon had only a limited portion of the land of Judah, they were forced to seek accommodation elsewhere. In consequence of their sloth or cowardice, some of the cities within their allotted territory were only *nominally* theirs, and were never taken from the Philistines till David's time, when, the Simeonites having forfeited all claim to them, he transferred them to the tribe of Judah (see 1 Sam. xxvii. 6). Let us learn two lessons from this tribe—first, with reference to this transfer, and second, with reference to the sad results that followed the supineness or cowardice which characterized it. 1. We learn from Gen. xl ix. 5—7 that *cruelty* characterized this son of Jacob, and that righteous retribution followed. Also we see how one sin begets another. Cruelty has in its train cowardice. True bravery and magnanimity is the result of a nature ennobled by Divine grace. Wherever we find cruelty, there we may be certain to find cowardice and supineness. One strengthened grace strengthens every other in the man. One indulged sin weakens every grace, and begets sins which bear that sin's "image and superscription" at every turn and throughout many generations. Simeon's descendants, though not personally guilty of their father's sin, have the brand upon them. Their sins are but the outward ripple on the stream where their father cast in the first stone of crime. Thus Simeon's sin lived in his generations. Thus men live long after they are dead. All true living influence begins to be potent after we have disappeared from the scene. How solemn, then, how awfully responsible, is each one's life! 2. Now look at the sad results of their supineness. Inasmuch as they did not fight the Philistines and gain possession of their cities, David took them from them and allotted them to Judah. What a remarkable confirmation of our Lord's words, "To him that *hath* [Judah] shall more be given; and from him that *hath not* [Simeon] even that he *hath* shall be taken away"! See another consequence of this supineness. They sought larger territory, and found it in the pastures of Gederah. For a time all seemed bright and prosperous. But soon they were attacked by foes, and had to fly to Mount Seir. This would have been unnecessary had they been valiant, fought the Philistines, and become possessed in *reality* of what they had only *nominal* possession before. Reader, learn the solemn warning. "*Fight* the good fight of faith, *lay hold* on eternal life;" "*Make* your calling and election *sure*." Make that *nominal* possession of Christ—that *profession* of religion you wear—a reality, a true and living *possession*. Thus will you, too, *save* yourself from similar results, and will *reap* your reward.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

Vers. 1-10.—THE SONS OF REUBEN. The tribe of Reuben is now taken third in order by the compiler, though Reuben was the first of all the sons of Israel. The distinct statements of vers. 1 and 2, respecting the degradation of Reuben and his loss of the rights of primogeniture, are not to be understood, however, as mentioned in any way to account for his standing third here. That Judah takes in any genealogy the first place needs no other apology than that contained in this passage, "Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler" (i.e. David, and in him "David's greater Son and Lord"). And that Simeon is taken immediately after Judah was natural enough, both because the second place belonged to him, and because his tribe, in journeying, in settlement, and in acknowledged friendship, was so nearly related to that of Judah. It is an important historical fact, a lesson and stern memento of crime, that the tale of Reuben is here as elsewhere told. Indeed, in the remarkably exalting language applied to Reuben (Gen. xlix. 3) by the dying father in those "blessings" of his sons which were so marvelously living with prophecy, that "blessing" seemed weighted with hard reality, and may really carry this meaning: "O Reuben I thought thou art my firstborn, though my might and the beginning of my strength, though the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power," yet, because of thy boiling lust (Gen. xxxv. 22) "thou shalt not excel." In that endowing charter of the patriarch's death-bed, the birthright of Reuben is not in so many words given to Joseph and his sons, but what is given to Joseph is so abundant above the lot of all the others, that we find no difficulty in accepting the formal statement of the fact here first found in this passage. The large measure of promise meted to Judah (Gen. xlix. 8-12) rests, no doubt, upon the title already referred to. There would seem to be also a righteous moral reason in Joseph after all becoming heir to the birthright, inasmuch as he was the eldest child of her who was Israel's real love, and who, but for deception and sharp practice, would have been his first wife. How he remembered her, and with what determined practical consequence, the affecting passage, Gen. xlvi. 1-7, 16, 21, 22, sufficiently reveals; yet comp. Deut. xxi. 15-17. The meaning of the last clause of ver. 1 is evidently that, though thus Reuben was the natural first-born, and Joseph had really the birthright,

the registration did not proceed in this instance (probably partly for the very reason of the ambiguity) by the order of birthright, but everything yielded to the special call for precedence on the part of Judah (ver. 2).

Vers. 3.—The four sons of Reuben here given are first enumerated in Gen. xlvi. 9; then in Exod. vi. 14; and again in Numb. xxvi. 5-7, where are also found the corresponding chief families of the tribe, the total of their fighting numbers amounting to 43,730, compared with 46,500 at the time of the Sinai census (Numb. ii. 11), a diminution due to the plague for the idolatry of Baal-peor (Numb. xxv. 9).

Vers. 4-6.—From which of the four sons of Reuben the line came in which Joel would appear, we do not know. Junius and Tremellius say Hanoch, others Carmi, while the Syriac Version has Carmi vice Joel. It is to be remarked that in Numb. xxvi. 8-10 a line of descent through *Pallu* is given, but reaching only to the second generation. Beerah in the present list will be only ninth at furthest from Reuben, so that it is evident that it is a very fragmentary genealogy, whether the hiatus be only one, viz. between Reuben's son (whichever it may be in question) and Joel, or whether both there and elsewhere also. Of none of the eight persons beginning with Joel and ending with Beerah is anything else known, unless either Shemaiah or Shemei may be identical with the Shema of ver. 8, in which case it might be also that the Joel of ver. 8 is identical with that of ver. 4. In this passage and ch. viii. 30 Baal appears as the name of a *man*. In this passage, and in ver. 26 and 2 Chron. xxviii. 20, we have a different form in each part of the word, of the *Tiglath-pileser* of 2 Kings xv. 29; xvi. 7. These slight differences in the position of the radicals, with the introduction or omission of the *n*, make as many as four different readings in the Hebrew. *Tiglath-pileser*, the second Assyrian king who came into conflict with the Israelites, reigned about B.C. 717-727. Gesenius thinks that the former half of the word is the same as *Diglath*, i.e. Tigris; and that the latter, a root occurring also in the name *Nab-polaris*, is from an Assyrian verb meaning "to guard." He translates the word as "Lord of the Tigris." The Assyrian reproduction of the name is *Tiglitti-pal-ta-ra* (Smith's 'Bible Dictionary'), or *Tukulti-pal-zara* ('Speaker's Commentary,' *in loc.*). The Captivity is spoken of further in the last verse of this chapter and in 2 Kings xv. 27-31. The Septuagint reads vers. 4 and 5 differently: "The sons of Joel, Semei and Banas,

his son; and the sons of Gog the son of Semei," etc., and this in all three editions—Vatican, Alexandrine, and Aldine.

Vers. 7, 8.—Of Jeiel, Zechariah, Bela, and Azaz nothing further is known. Shema and Joel may be those of ver. 4, as above. The expression, his brethren, i.e. the brethren of Beerah, must be read generally. The intimation, when the genealogy of their generations was reckoned, is probably explained by the contents of ver. 17 (of which hereafter). Aroer (*אָרֹר*, or *אָרֹרָה*); a place east of the Jordan, overhanging the torrent of Arnon, which was a boundary between Moab and the Amorites, and afterwards between Moab and Reuben. There is little doubt that Burchhardt has identified the ruins of Aroer (see Numb. xxxii. 38; Deut. ii. 24, 36; iii. 8, 12, 16; Josh. xii. 1, 2; xiii. 9, 16; Judg. xi. 13, 26, where note transposition of letters in the Hebrew; 2 Kings x. 33). Moab seems to have regained it later (Jer. xlvi. 1-47; see interesting arts, "Arnon" and "Aroer," Smith's "Bible Dictionary"). Nebo and Baal-meon are also mentioned together in Numb. xxxii. 38; and Baal-meon with Moab in Ezek. xxv. 9. This Nebo, the town, is distinct from Mount Nebo. It is remarkable that it is not mentioned, unless under one of the "changed" names (Numb. xxxii. 38), in the list of the towns of Reuben (Josh. xiii. 15-23). Nebo was the name of a heathen deity, known among the Chaldeans (Isa. xlvi. 1), Babylonians, and Assyrians; and this constituted one reason, if not the reason, for changing its name when it had been affixed to the Moabite city.

Ver. 9.—Keil and others refer this verse to the people of Bela; yet others apply it to Joel. It would seem nearest the facts to apply it to the main subject of the paragraph—Reuben, Gilead (Deut. iii. 12-16) had for its boundaries, on the north Bashan, on the south Moab, on the east the Arabian desert. Its situation evidently exposed it to Assyrian invasion and frequent encounter with desert tribes (Josh. xvii. 1; Numb. xxvi. 29, 30).

Ver. 10.—Among such conflicts, one with a people descended presumably from Hagar or Ishmael (though ch. xxvii. 30, 31, and Ps. lxxxiii. 6 are somewhat needlessly interpreted to be opposed to this) is here alluded to. It takes us to the time of Saul, and from that time up to the time of "the Captivity" (ver. 22) the victorious Reubenites, Gadites, and people of the half-tribe Manasseh had the benefit of enlarged domain at their expense: "They dwelt in their steads," after seizing great spoil. It is exceedingly likely that we have the perpetuation of the name Hagarites in the Agraei (modern *Hejer*) of Strabo, xvi. 767; Pliny, 'Hist. Nat.,' vi. 32; Diony-

sius, 'Perieg.,' 956; Pt. v. 2 (see art. "Hagarites" in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary').

Vers. 11-17.—The tribe of Gad is taken next, and occupies but few lines. Gad was born seventh in order of all the sons of Jacob (Gen. xxx. 9-12), and first of the children of Leah's maid Zilpah. The compiler seems to pass easily on to Gad, from the mere circumstance of the name of the tribe being so constantly linked with that preceding, in the matter of local settlement on the east of Jordan, after the journeyings of the wilderness (Josh. xiii. 7, 8). The geography in vers. 11 and 16 offers very little difficulty. Compared with the time of the first settling of the Gadites (Deut. iii. 10-13; Josh. xiii. 25, 30), it is evident that they had pushed their borders further to the north, trenching somewhat upon the lot of the half-tribe Manasseh, as they also in turn extended their limits northward to Hermon (ver. 23). This reconciles Josh. xiii. 30 with the present passage. Salcah, or (Authorized Version) Salkah (Deut. iii. 10; Josh. xiii. 11), is probably to be identified as the modern *Sulkhad*, at the extreme eastern point of the plain *Hauran*, which is bordered by the desert. "In Gilead in Bashan" may be read, with some, as two co-ordinate places, separating them by a stop; or may point to a time when Bashan included the upper half of Gilead. Sharon, which Keil, quoting Reland, 'Pal. Ill.,' 370, would make the well-known Sharon of Carmel and the Mediterranean, is, though unmentioned elsewhere, probably distinguished sufficiently from it by the absence of the article, which is invariably prefixed to the other. Stanley's suggestion ('Sinai and Palestine,' edit. 1866, pp. 484, 485, 260) would seem exceedingly apt, that it is one in fact, as one in derivation and meaning, with the *Mishor* (i.e. "level lands," "table-land") of Gilead and Bashan. With this explanation, however, the term "suburbs" does not so well agree. Upon the other side, distant as the well-known Sharon is, a link of connection might be found with it, in that the other Manasseh half-tribe stretched into its plains; and in that case the last word of the verse, *מִתְקַנְתָּה*, might mean (Josh. xvii. 9) "the outgoings" of the land or regions in question to the "sea" -coast.

Ver. 12.—The four proper names in this verse are not known in connection with the same persons elsewhere. The Septuagint translates *Shaphat* as "the scribe," applying the description to the foregoing *Jaanai*.

Ver. 13.—And their brethren. This chapter (see ver. 7) seems to introduce the use of this word, which must be understood generically. The seven persons are nowhere else mentioned.

Vers. 14, 15.—These are the children of Abihail; *i.e.* the seven “brethren” of the preceding verse. A rapid line of descent, or rather of ascent, consisting of ten generations, from Abihail to Guni, here follows. The division between these verses has unfortunately cut in half one name, *i.e.* Buzaki. The translators of the Septuagint saw that the two verses composed one line of ascent, but instead of piecing “Aki” to “Buz,” translated it as “brother.” Though this line takes us some way back, we find nowhere else any clue or identification of any of these ten persons. Of the twenty-one persons in all, therefore, named as belonging to the tribe of Gad, nothing else is known; and we have nothing to guide us to connect them with any one rather than another of the original “sons of Gad” (Gen. xlvi. 16; Numb. xvi. 15—18).

Ver. 17.—The very form of the language of this verse would indicate that two genealogies are intended. This quite tallies with the fact that there were two *chronicles*, one for each division of the nation, *i.e.* “the chronicles of the kings of Judah” (2 Kings xv. 6) and “the chronicles of the kings of Israel” (2 Kings xv. 11), in which same chapter both Jeroboam (II.) of Israel and Jotham of Judah are spoken of, the latter beginning to reign in Judah some twenty years (the exact chronology is very confused here) after the death of the former. Although presumably it would be an object of closer interest with Israel than with Judah to effect the registration of the Gadite genealogy, yet it was most just that Judah should do so as well. This would both vindicate Judah’s own right place and be a happy omen of the continued predominance of her position compared with that of Israel. Independently of the question of effecting the actual registration, however, it is quite possible that, so long as history ran by the side of history, Israel would gather and keep all it could of Judah, and Judah all it could of Israel.

Vers. 18—22.—These verses appear to be the fuller development of the war in Saul’s time, mentioned in ver. 10—the account apparently there delayed till the genealogy of the tribe of Gad had been given, and which still seems premature till the contents of vers. 23 and 24 should have been given.

Ver. 19.—The name of Nodab we have not elsewhere; but those of Jetur and Ne-phish are names from the very origin of the tribe of Ishmael (Gen. xxv. 13—16; ch. i. 29—31). It would be possible to consider them here as in *apposition* with the description, the Hagarites (respecting whom see note on ver. 10); but they may more probably be regarded as favourite names,

still repeated in the descendants of the tribe. The people of Nephish have not made their mark deep on the page of ethnographic history; but the people of Jetur have done so. Their stunted territory appears in the name Ituraea (Luke iii. 1). Their people reappear also (Josephus, ‘Ant.’ xiii. c. 11, § 3; Strabo, xvi. 518, 520). Nor is it an unnoticeable contribution to the truth of our history here to put, side by side with the description of the qualities and of the arms and weapons of warfare of the Manassites and their helpers of Reuben and Gad (ver. 18), those of the Ituræans, their antagonists (Virgil, ‘Georg.’ ii. 448; Cicero, ‘Phil.’ ii. 44; Lucan, ‘Pharsalia,’ vii. 230; see Smith’s ‘Bible Dictionary,’ i. 905).

Ver. 21.—Of men; literally, *of the soul*, *i.e.* *life of men* (comp. 2 Kings vii. 7 with Jer. xliv. 7, in illustration of the twofold application of *נֶפֶשׁ*; see also Numb. xxxi. 19, 28, 32—35).

Ver. 23, 24.—“The half-tribe of Manasseh” is here very briefly treated of. Manasseh and his brother Ephraim stand in the place of Joseph, both the children of Joseph’s Egyptian wife, Asenath, and born before the famine. Though Manasseh was the elder, Jacob gave the chief blessing (Gen. xlviii. 10—22) to Ephraim. The Manassites were descended from Manasseh through his son Machir, born of a Syrian concubine (Septuagint, Gen. xlvi. 20; 1. 23; Numb. xxvi. 28—34; Josh. xvii. 1—3; ch. vii. 14, 15). Machir evidently was *spes regis* (though apparently not the only son, for see *Asriel*, or *Ashriel*, in above references), and is repeatedly mentioned with his son Gilead. It is probable that the division of the tribe was determined partly according to the energy of those who composed it at the time of division—the more warlike being more adapted to the east of Jordan. Nevertheless Machir is distinctly mentioned westward, as well as with Gilead eastward (comp. Judg. v. 14—17; Josh. xiii. 29—31). (For the further prosecution of this part of the subject, see *Exposition*, ch. vii. 14—19.)

Ver. 23.—Baal-hermon, etc. These three names need scarcely be read as different names for exactly the same region, but as designating different sides or heights of what was essentially one and the same well-known mountain district, with which would agree Ps. xliii. 6, “Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan and of the *Hermonites*, from the hill Mizar.” So Deut. iii. 8—10 tells us that Hermon was called *Sirion* by the Sidonians; *Shenir*, *i.e.* *Senir* (*שְׁנִיר*, exactly the same word in the Hebrew text in all the four places of its occurrence—Cant. iv. 8; Ezek. xxvii. 5), by the Amorites. And the suggestion of Grove

is likely enough, that *Baal-hermon* was the Phoenician cast of the name. If any point were to be gained by reading the names, however, as intended to cover exactly the same tract, it may be noted (1) that the Hebrew conjunction will perfectly admit of being translated "even;" and (2) that the order of the names, going from the foreign to the native Hermon itself, would so far favour it.

Ver. 24.—*Epher*; same root with *Ophrah* (Judg. vi. 11, 15). Of the seven heads of this half-tribe here quoted, no individual mention is made elsewhere. Ch. xii. 19—22 confirms their renown for valour.

Vers. 25, 26.—The "transgressors" here described include manifestly not this half-tribe Manasseh alone, but the other tribes of Israel of whom this chapter has treated.

Ver. 25.—And they went a whoring (וָיַעֲשׂוּ); so 2 Chron. xxi. 11, 13. This verb, in one form of its root or another, occurs as many as ninety-seven times in the Pentateuch, Judges, Joshua, Psalms, Proverbs; and prophets, for only twice in Kings and four times in Chronicles, in all the rest of the Old Testament writings.

Ver. 26.—*Pul* and *Tilgath-pilneser*. These two were chosen ministers of God's will, if not ministers of himself. We can identify the date of this punishment which befell the transgressing Israelites east of the Jordan. The visit of the former, in the reign of Menahem (2 Kings xv. 15—20), may be interpreted and might have operated as a lesson and a warning. He was bought off with a thousand talents of silver. It seems to be said with significance, "So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land." It was in the reign of Pekah, the usurping successor of Menahem's son Pekahiah, that the completer punishment fell, and Tilgath-pilneser effected the captivity spoken of here and in 2 Kings xv. 27—29. The name *Pul* cannot, it would appear, be a pure Assyrian name, and there is reason to think it may be identified with *Vul-lush* (grandson of the Shalmaneser who warred with Benhadad, etc.), a name found on Assyrian monuments, and belonging to a king who reigned at Calah, B.C. 800—750 (see art. "Pul," Smith's "Bible Dictionary"). *Tilgath-pilneser* (see notes on ver. 6) was probably the founder of the lower dynasty of *Assyria*, and first king of the new empire.

His first invasion was one chiefly of Israel and Samaria (2 Kings xv. 29; Isa. ix. 1). His second was of a much more significant character. Called in to aid Judah under Ahaz against Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria in alliance, he both conquered these latter and brought into vassalage Judah itself (2 Kings xv. 37; xvi. 9, 10; 2 Chron. xxviii. 6—8; Isa. ix. 1). *Halah*; *Habor*; *Hara*; *Gozan*. This enumeration exceeds that of 2 Kings xvii. 6 by the addition of *Hara*, important as helping with consistent witness to the antiquity of the region described. *Halah* (not the "Calah" of Gen. x. 11) is believed to be identifiable with *Chalcitis*, its verbal resemblance to which comes out a little more evidently in its Hebrew form (הַלָּה). A trace of it possibly remains in the name of a hill, *Gla*, on the *Khabour*, i.e. *Habor* of this passage, an important tributary of the Euphrates, and not the "Chebar" of Ezekiel. This name *Khabour* is found in an Assyrian inscription dating upwards of eight centuries before Christ. The mention of *Habor* in 2 Kings xvii. 6 and xviii. 11 is, in the Authorized Version, made to convey the impression of a place "by" the "river of *Gozan*," instead of being, what the Hebrew says, "the river of *Gozan*." Here, on the other hand, *Gozan* is, in the Authorized Version, incorrectly translated as a river itself, instead of the region of a river. It is, according to the testimony of Layard ('Nineveh and Babylon,' pp. 270—312), a remarkably fertile tract, being the *Gauzanitis* of Ptolemy, and substantially the *Mygdonia* of Polybius and Strabo. *Hara*; הַרָּה, with little doubt, the same as הַרָּה *Haran*, or *Charan* (Gen. xi. 31), the ancient adopted home of Abraham, in Padan-aram, in Mesopotamia, on the Belik, a small tributary of the Euphrates. It is the Greek *Carrhae* of Strabo and Polybius. These four names purport to give us, probably in brief, the information that those of the Captivity here alluded to were divided—some to settle at *Halab* on one river, some in *Hara* on another, and the rest in the district called *Gauzanitis*. The region called *Halah* and that called *Gauzanitis*, however, were both watered by the *Khabour*, and therefore the insertion of the name *Haran* where it is inserted occasions some difficulty.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 25.—*The end of idolatry.* Notwithstanding the exceeding brevity of style of the genealogical portion of Chronicles, it is not entirely without reflections of a moral and religious kind. Few they certainly are; but, when they do occur, they are of a very pronounced sort. This chapter has spoken of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and

the half-tribe of Manasseh, and has spanned their history, though with many a gap in it, from the first up to their captivity. This last event approached, is not to be recorded, however, without a previous and very distinct notification of what led to it. These causes, we will know, were the same with all the other tribes who were also taken into captivity, and in other parts of these genealogies corresponding allusion is made to the Captivity in respect of the other tribes as well. But the statements before us, for whatever reason now attached to the above-mentioned two tribes and a half, are emphatic. They invite us to take the opportunity of lingering awhile, and of asking what it is in their twofold shape they contain and suggest. The brevity of the solemn indictment will be helpful to us, and when we have purposely departed awhile from that brevity it will be convenient to return to it again. Up and down the history of these two and a half tribes and of all the other tribes, the mournful facts, the miserable facts, are but too apparent during the successions of many generations. Yet we have the indictment almost formally drawn up (2 Kings vii. 7—17), and though but a summary, yet it reads with a fearful fulness and directness. The pointedness and exactness of the counts of the charge are such as to bespeak only too certainly their fidelity to facts. It seems necessary only in briefest outline to rehearse them. “They feared other gods; walked in the statutes of the heathen, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made; did secretly those things not right against the Lord their God; built them high places in all their cities—from the tower of the watchman to the fenced city; set up images and groves in every hill, under every green tree; burnt incense in all the high places as did the heathen; wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger; served idols, whereof the Lord said ‘Ye shall not do this;’ would not hear; hardened their necks; rejected his statutes and his covenant with their fathers, and his testimony; followed vanity; became vain; went after the heathen; left all the commandments of the Lord; made molten images, *even* two calves; worshipped all the host of heaven; served Baal; caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire; used divinations and enchantments; sold themselves to do evil.” It is to be observed, then, that this thick succession of allegations of sin laid at the door of a people who might have been so blessed, is what underlies the two concise statements of the text, “They transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a-whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them.” And these two statements describe one sin, the name of which is *idolatry*. We may inquire here—

I. **IN WHAT THE SIN OF IDOLATRY CONSISTS.** Described briefly, it consists in permitting the creature-sense of *dependence*, of *disposition to follow*, of *affection*, and the creature-duty of *service*, to become supremely attached to any object lower than the highest. Among all matters of possession and of material acquisition around us, that may be an admirable modesty and a moderation to be imitated which should exhibit a man, *not* grasping the utmost possible of attainment, *not* straining for the highest which might possibly be touched. But there are tendencies of affection, of obedience, of practical service, belonging to us as creatures, and which are bound to find their end in God alone, in none beneath him. True nature, the simplest dictates of gratitude, reason itself, when unobstructed, proclaim the inherent right to these to lie in the Creator himself. He is the idolater who in these circumstances leaves the One absolute Highest and Best, in order to lean upon, to waste affection upon, to serve systematically, the lower. Once make this concession, once sacrifice this highest dictate of an intelligent nature, and the heart and life are laid wide open to every distraction, to the incursion of every disorder. The indictment already quoted above is the sufficient commentary, the ample illustration hereof.

II. **WHAT IT IS IN HUMAN NATURE WHICH SEEKS IN ALL AGES TO HAVE MADE IT SO READY A VICTIM TO THE SIN OF IDOLATRY.** When the nature of the sin of idolatry is barely stated, as a seeming preference for the lower and the insecure and the temporary in comparison of the opposites of these, it seems almost incredible that it should have had, should still have, so wide a sway. It were to have been supposed that men would know and would choose in the long run the best for themselves. One consideration by itself is sufficient to explain this; for idolatry is human nature’s protest *against living and walking by faith!* It is the old battle, the battle also ever new, of sense against faith. And true as it is that faith is not less really a *principle of human*

nature than sense a *part* of it, the principle has too generally been the party in the conflict compelled to succumb. Men, till they have been divinely renewed, appear always to have found the exercise of faith, in its higher domains, their "strange work." They have not repudiated it in their own human relations; they have testified to the existence of the germ of it in themselves; that germ has not refused to show life and growth in human evil and while *it* could raise its head at all in earthly atmosphere, but it undoubtedly has seemed smitten and blighted in proportion as the atmosphere offered it has been most pure and nearest heaven. Idolatry evidently fights against faith in two of its highest functions. 1. As that which offers to reveal to an inner eye rather than display to the bodily eye. 2. And as that which whispers ever, "Wait, wait," expectant of a future, possibly even a distant future, in place of seizing the gratification of the present hour. It is against these same things that an unregenerate human nature ever opposes itself. Those vast spheres of life, that tremendous force of life which the bodily eye cannot see, and that power which gives to distance nearness, to the far, far-off future the name of "now," are the aversion of sense, the delights of faith. The Israelites' idolatry in grosser form brings out, from the very first instances in which the charge of it was fixed upon them, these as the plain rather than deep or mysterious causes of it. A more developed world's idolatry, a wiser world's idolatry, a far subtler world's idolatry, needs not to go in quest of any deeper, remoter sources. These are deep enough and too incontestable.

III. WHAT CONSIDERATIONS OF SPECIAL AGGRAVATION ARE INSTANCED HERE. 1. The hosts of the people "transgressed against the God of *their fathers*." The sin of their idolatry was, therefore, heightened by the fact that it was against: (1) One long known to them as a nation; (2) One entitled to their more scrupulous veneration for the honour and the love they owed their own fathers; (3) One of whom those fathers had oft told them "the wondrous works he had wrought" on their behalf. The history of their own God, which began for them with Abraham, which received so striking an impulse in Joseph, which was the talk of the whole earth from the deliverance from Egypt and the passage of the Red Sea, which glittered again with event and circumstance and miracle in the journeyings of the wilderness, and which shone bright as the noonday sun in the glorious reigns of David and Solomon;—was this a history which could permit them to transgress idolatrously against him who had invested them with all that was greatest and most merciful and fullest of glory? 2. While the people thus forsook their own God and the God of their fathers, for whom, for what was it they thus acted? It was to supersede him (1) by the very gods of the people of the land, whom *they* superseded, and of whose land they took possession; (2) by the very gods of the people whom their own God alone had driven out and had destroyed before them, and from their vengeance had safely preserved them. Privilege, mercy, and warning they flagrantly set at nought. They forfeited, without the pretence of an excuse, exalted place, distinguishing honour. Unprovoked, untempted except of their own evil heart and lusts, they forsook the true God and their true and mighty Friend in order to go with an unholly love, with a self-ruining service, after false gods. Such rebellion was indeed "the sin of witchcraft," such "stubbornness was iniquity and idolatry." And to a people so long led and loved of the Lord, so well fed and securely kept, that rebellion and stubbornness brought what they ever must bring to those who yield to them, the loss of their very highest good, the forfeiting of their grandest privileges, and the dread eclipse of Divine favour and presence.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—*Judah's pre-eminence.* The tribe of Judah holds the first and most prominent place in these genealogies. Reuben was the firstborn, and Joseph had the birth-right; but precedence was given to Judah. This was foretold in the remarkable language in which old Jacob, upon his dying bed, spoke of this one of his sons and the tribe of which he was the progenitor.

I. THE TRIBE OF JUDAH TOOK PRECEDENCE OF ALL. When the tribes were numbered under Moses, that of Judah was found to exceed all the others in number. When the Israelites were organized for the war against the Canaanites, Judah was divinely

appointed to be the vanguard of the army. A similar precedence is accorded to the tribe of Judah in this Book of Chronicles.

II. **FROM THE TRIBE OF JUDAH SPRANG DAVID AND THE ROYAL HOUSE.** Of Israel the Lord chose Judah, and of that tribe the family of Jesse, and of that family the youthful David. The great King of Israel and his glorious son shed a splendour upon the national annals. And when the separation of the kingdoms came about, the kingdom of Judah was distinguished in many ways, both civil and religious, above the sister kingdom of Northern Palestine.

III. **THE GREATEST DISTINCTION AND PRIVILEGE OF JUDAH WAS THIS: FROM THIS TRIBE SPRANG THE MESSIAH.** Jesus, the Son of David, was a descendant from Judah. This was the true "Lion of the tribe of Judah."

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Mark the hand of God in family history. Providence raises up one house and sets down another. Families are sometimes selected to fulfil high purposes; and when they are found faithful to their vocation honour is put upon them by him who says, "Them that honour me I will honour." 2. Remember your accountability to God for family advantages. If God has given much, he will require the more.—T.

Vers. 18-22.—Victors and vanquished. The two tribes and a half who occupied the province east of the Jordan were naturally regarded with hostility or jealousy by their Arab neighbours. Conflicts arose, having reference especially to the possession of the rich pasture-lands. In the time of Saul, and apparently under a later king, there was war between the trans-Jordanic tribes and the Hagarites, an Ishmaelitish race. These verses record the war and its result, namely, the defeat of the Hagarites and the possession of the land by the Israelites until the time of the Captivity. Observe—

1. **THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF THE VICTORY.** The warriors engaged on behalf of Israel were numerous, amounting to forty-four thousand men. They were not only numerous, but valiant, well armed, and trained to fight.

II. **THE EXPLANATION OF VICTORY.** The chronicler gives this account of the matter: "The war was of God;" "They cried to God in the battle, and he was entreated of them." All strength and valour are from God, and in this respect we are justified in ascribing victory unto him. It is not, however, every just cause that triumphs, and defeat is sometimes the lot of the innocent and those who contend for their rights and liberty. It is a consolation to know that, in any case, what happens is permitted by Providence and is overruled by Providence for good. The King of Sweden, before the great battle of Lutzen, prayed, "Jesus, vouchsafe this day to be my strong Helper, and give me courage to fight for the honour of thy Name!"

III. **THE FRUITS OF VICTORY.** There were immediate fruits in the vast spoil and booty taken by the conquerors (ver. 21), and abiding fruits in the lands which the tribes won and possessed and inhabited for generations.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Trace the hand of God even in human wars. 2. Concerning wars in which both parties profess to fight for justice, let nations accustom themselves deliberately to ask, "Is the war of God?" If men would be guided by the answer to this question, many wars would be checked and prevented, and the blessings of peace would oftener be secured.—T.

Vers. 25, 26.—Judgment and retribution. History is something more than a mere record of events. Chronicles, strictly speaking, are the materials only of history. But this book contains, again and again, the Divine philosophy of history. It exhibits the action of the moral, the righteous Ruler of Israel and of mankind. In the history of the trans-Jordanic tribes we have an illustration of the working of great principles of Divine government.

I. **THE OCCASION AND REASON OF THE DIVINE DISPLEASURE.** Surrounded by heathen, they themselves largely lapsed into heathenism. This was all the more discreditable in them because they forsook Jehovah, the God of their fathers, who had done great things for their nation, and because they attached themselves to the worship of the deities of the very people over whom their God had given them victory and rule. Accordingly their conduct is represented as spiritual fornication, or adultery.

II. **THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE DIVINE DISPLEASURE.** Under Divine providence, Pil

was permitted to make war upon the idolatrous tribes and lay them under tribute, and afterwards Tilgath-pilneser was permitted to carry the people away captive into Assyria. God always has instruments to effect his purposes; even the wicked are used by him to chasten and punish the disobedient and rebellious.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DIVINE DISPLEASURE. It would be an interesting subject of inquiry why God thus chastened his chosen people again and again by way of captivity. This we know, that the exile in the East was the means of confirming the Hebrews in their monotheism, and that never again did they lapse into idolatry.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. As to sin, we are taught that its root, its essence, is in departing from God. 2. As to the Divine government, we are taught that God "will not clear the guilty," and that "the way of transgressors is hard." 3. And we have suggested to us the mercy of God in his provision of reconciliation and acceptance upon repentance, faith, and return to himself.—T.

Vers. 1—17.—*The three threads of destiny.* "That is my destiny" is the creed of a foolish fatalism or else the half-hearted excuse of a soul sadly conscious of sin and failure. The full truth respecting a man's or a nation's destiny is that it depends on three factors—circumstance, the Divine will, and character. This is well illustrated here.

I. CIRCUMSTANCE. Mention is made of the birthright (ver. 1). Usually the eldest son enjoyed this, and, with this, dominion and a double share in the division of the estate. Through all the tribes of Israel, for succeeding generations, the authority and the possessions of individual men depended on their birth—whose children they were and whether they were the firstborn or not. In the case of Joseph's sons (ver. 1), Manasseh and Ephraim had the headship of a most powerful tribe, because they were the sons of the estimable and beloved sons of Joseph. "The sons of Reuben" (ver. 3) took their share of honour and estate, whatever may have been left them by their father, etc. So with us in every age and land. What our fortune and future will be, in what society we shall move, what consideration we shall enjoy, etc.,—this depends largely on what men call "the accident of birth," the parentage from which we spring, on the circumstances in which we enter the world and in which we pass our earlier years. Circumstance is one thread of destiny. The fact is a reason why we should not pride ourselves on our good position; also why we should not despise others in positions much lower than our own.

II. THE DIVINE WILL. "Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler" (ver. 2). And how came Judah to prevail? Was it not chiefly, if not wholly, by the distinguishing grace of God? He chose David to be the ruler, to be King of Israel, to be the ancestor of the Messiah (see Gen. xlix. 8; Judg. i. 1, 2; ch. xxviii. 4). Our heritage here is, in part, chosen for us of God (Ps. xlvi. 4). He determines our portion by (1) the mental faculties and moral dispositions with which he endows us; (2) the providential openings he provides for us; (3) the direct Divine promptings with which he inspires us. And since God has so much to do with our fortunes in this world, we should (1) be humble in prosperity; (2) be contented in lowliness; (3) be submissive in adversity.

III. CHARACTER. Reuben might have had a far more honourable and influential position than he and his posterity enjoyed. Circumstances favoured it; God would have been willing to sanction it. But he forfeited it by his sin (ver. 1). His shameful incontinence lowered the level of his fortunes and of those of his children. Had he been a better man he would have held a larger share of prominence and power. Character is a strong thread in the cord of human destiny. What we shall be in the world, to what we shall rise, and what heritage we shall leave to our children,—all this depends in very large part indeed on the character we form in youth; (1) purity, (2) sobriety, (3) honesty, (4) diligence, (5) sagacity, (6) courage, (7) civility (pleasantness of address),—these are the constituents of success. When these are absent, life must be a failure; when present, it is almost certain to be a success. But there is one thing not to be overlooked, viz. that we may make sure and *must* make sure of the destiny of the good and holy—"the heritage of them that fear God's Name." Apart from this, success is short-lived and superficial. With this, temporal misfortunes may be calmly borne, for beyond is an everlasting portion which will make these soon to be forgotten.—C.

Vers. 18-26.—*Devotion, declension, and doom.* In this brief story we have a painfully characteristic piece of human history—first, spiritual soundness; then consequent prosperity; then laxity and sin; then punishment and disaster. We trace the steps.

I. A COMMENCEMENT IN MORAL AND SPIRITUAL SOUNDNESS. These two tribes and a half were brave and godly men: “valiant men” (ver. 18); godly men also, for they “cried to God in the battle, and . . . they put their trust in him” (ver. 20); and it is clear that they were acting so much under the direction and in the service of Jehovah that it could be said of their struggle “the war was of God” (ver. 22). It is possible that a war of the same kind, a struggle between contending armies, may now be “of God,” and that godly soldiers may cry, with genuine and acceptable devotion, for Divine succour. But such engagements are rare. The illustration of this truth is found now in other fields: (1) in the battle of life; (2) in the struggle against particular evils, such as drunkenness, impurity, etc.; (3) in the great missionary campaign. Here are three principal virtues in all moral and spiritual warfare—valour (ver. 18), prayer (ver. 20), and trust in his Word (ver. 20).

II. CONSEQUENT SUCCESS AT THE HAND OF GOD. “They were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand,” etc. (ver. 20). Beside the security and joy of victory came possessions (ver. 21) and a home (vers. 22, 23). Those who, in the battles they fight under God, strive in accordance with his will, manfully, prayerfully, and expectantly, will certainly be rewarded with (1) the joy of victory, (2) increase of power and spiritual wealth, and (3) the approval and reward of the Divine Captain. Too often—alas for human infirmity!—comes—

III. SPIRITUAL DECLENSION. “They transgressed against the God of their fathers,” etc. (ver. 25). Their comfortable prosperity led to free intercourse with ungodly neighbours, and this to laxity of thought and word, and this, ultimately, to defection and rank disobedience. So is it only too often in the history of men, of Churches, of nations. Their early piety leads to an enjoyable prosperity; this leads to intimate association and intercourse with those less devout and pure; and this to contamination and corruption. It is the course which humanity has taken in every dispensation, in every land, in every Church; not necessarily, but with a lamentable frequency. So common is the case that all prosperous piety may well hear a loud voice bidding it *Beware!* Spiritual declension is unperceived in its beginning; spreads through the soul—through the ranks—with perilous subtlety; grows with gathering rapidity; is increasingly hard to overcome; is fatal in its final issues. It leads to—

IV. A MISERABLE DOOM. It ended, in the case of these Israelites, in defeat and exile—in national destruction (ver. 26). It ends, with us: 1. In utter defeat and failure; so that the purpose of our life, whether individual or collective, is wholly thwarted. 2. In spiritual exile; in disastrous separation from God. He is no longer *with* us as he once was; he is no longer *in* us. We live apart from him in a far country. 3. In saddest disappointment. The Master is grieved that his Church (his disciple) has fallen from its (his) high estate; the good and wise grieve over one more deplorable defection.—C.

Vers. 1-8.—*Reuben.* Reuben was the eldest son of Jacob. The birthright which was his, included dominion and a double portion; both of these were forfeited by sin (see Gen. xlix. 3, 4) and were transferred to Joseph. But as Joseph's posterity was not mentioned first, the historian explains by saying that the genealogy was not to be reckoned by *birthright*, as the superior honour and privilege had been previously conferred on Judah. This tribe had the pre-eminence over all the tribes, not on account of Judah himself, but because Christ, “the chief Ruler” (see ver. 2), was to come out of it. Reuben's sin comes in here as a parenthesis. God will brand sin wherever he sees it. It is no trifle with him, nor does he ever forget it. Only one thing can blot it out—the blood of the Lamb. We may forget it, but he will make it to come in as a *parenthesis* in our own life or in that of our posterity, that we may learn what an evil and bitter thing it is, and that he will not trifle with it. But these *fruits* of sin, these parentheses, how they come in ages after, marring the brightest escutcheon, hindering our blessing, and tarnishing God's glory! The curse of our crime is handed down through generations, and the innocent child is humiliated and thrown back and its fairest prospects blighted. Again we have Christ brought before us, at the opening

of this chapter, in the prominence given to the tribe of Judah. The *natural* birthright is set aside. It is so always. Nature's order is reversed in the kingdom of God. "The last shall be first, and the first shall be last." This is the law of God's kingdom. Man's rejected is God's chosen. Grace, and not nature, takes the lead. Little did Reuben's posterity judge of the *chief* reason why he was set aside. Little did Judah's posterity know the *chief* reason for his pre-eminence. God was putting down one and raising up another with reference to the future manifestation and glory of his dear Son. To human eye this did not appear. Thus was God working behind the scenes, working out the counsels of his own will, and all with a view to the glory of Christ. So it is now. We see the sin of man as in Reuben; we see the counterworking of Satan, crossing, to all human appearance, the purposes of God; but behind all God is working. God is raising up one and putting down another, and all with reference to the advancement of the kingdom and glory of his dear Son. It does not *appear* so to our short-sighted judgment, but we are no judges of God's ways and thoughts: "His ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts." Behind every little event in your daily life God is working. And he is never more really carrying out his purposes of wisdom and grace and love than when those events seem to run counter to this end. Judge of God's ways by the *opposite*. The more apparently opposed the more really he is there.—W.

Vers. 18—24.—*Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh: their valour.* We have first a description of the men brought before us. They were "valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war." Such are God's children to be at all times. They are not to rest in their Christianity, not to sit down and fold their hands because they are saved. No; they are to "fight the good fight of faith," to "war a good warfare," to "put on the whole armour of God," to be "good soldiers of Jesus Christ." In order to be "good soldiers" they must be "valiant" for the truth; they must be "able" men, endued with the power of the Holy Spirit. They must be men able to bear "buckler and sword," and to shoot with *bow*, and *skilful* in war." They must be men trained of God's Holy Spirit, men "able" to use all the spiritual weapons of truth in the armoury of God. They must be "able to shoot with *bow*"—to send home some pointed arrow of truth to some heart and conscience by word and by deed. They must be "able to bear the *sword*"—to use the Word of God, the "sword of the Spirit," with power. So that the "sword" and the "bow" may be said to take in the *near* and the *distant*—the "sword" the hand-to-hand conflict; the bow the distant weapon, the arrow *well aimed*. The different *aspects* of truth, the different *ways* of using it, the different *attitudes* which the Christian is to take with regard to the enemy,—these are the points of instruction shadowed forth by this variety of weapon. He is to be taught of God's Spirit, disciplined by prayer, by meditation, by the reading of the Word, by dependence on God, yea, and by his own defeats and failures, his sorrows and sins, so as to be "skilful in war." And observe that this spiritual warfare is to be no mere *head-knowledge*, no mere *talk*, no hollow profession. It is a real thing. Mark it here—"they *went out* to the war;" "they *made war*;" "they were *helped against*" the enemy in the war; they *conquered* in the war (vers. 18—20). Here are the four stages of Christian warfare in all its reality—they "went out;" they "made;" they were "helped;" they conquered. And why did they conquer? What was the secret of their victory? Was it their "valour," their "sword," their "bow," their "buckler," their "skill"? Ah, no! All would have been in vain if it had depended on these. "The Hagarites were delivered into their hand, . . . for they cried to God in the battle." "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth" (Ps. cxxiv. 1—6). Nor were the Reubenites conquerors only. "They took away their cattle; of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, of men *an hundred thousand*." What a victory, and what abundance of spoil! Yes; the Lord's battles are always sure things—sure victory and sure spoil. He giveth *great* victory; he enables us to carry away rich blessings from the spiritual

conflict. It is no *mere* winning with the Christian. It is a glorious warfare and an equally glorious victory. "In all these things," says the apostle, "we are *more* than conquerors through him that loved us." We do indeed "war a *good* warfare." There are "Hagarites" all round you and within you. Be "skilful in war;" gird the "buckler," the "bow," and the "sword" of truth close to your souls. "Go out to the war;" "make war." "Cry to God" in the battle. "Put your trust in him." "Your *labour* in the Lord is not in vain." So shall you be a conqueror; so shall you carry away great spoil; so shall "many fall down slain" by you. Be a "valiant" man; so shall you be "*more* than conqueror" in everything that is against you. And remember, it is not your battle, but God's. Mark what is said: "There fell down many slain, because the war was of God." Yes; the war *is* of God. He cannot look upon sin. He has no part in *this* world. It is all in *spirit* contrary to him. He would have you not "*conformed*" to it but "*transformed*." "This is not your rest. Arise ye, and depart." He has better things in store for you. Everything here is too poor for the King's sons. You are waiting for the gold and the jewels and the crowns of the celestial city. "Arise ye, and depart." This war, this discipline, this struggle with sin, those defeats, those humiliations, those hot scalding tears, those bleeding hearts, those mysteries and baffling enigmas making you cry out, "What does it all mean?"—it is all of God. This warfare is fitting you for the glory. It is making you to know yourself and to know Jesus. It is brightening your crown; it is tuning your golden harp; it is weaving your starlit diadem. Yes; "the war is of God." Oh, if you could only see it! If you could only look at it, *just for a moment*, from yonder height of glory, how it would all seem right then! If you could only look at it through the tearless eye, up on the height, out of the smoke and din and roar of the battle in the plain, how it would all be right! Yes; "the war is of God." Then war a *good* warfare. The Captain of your salvation will soon be here to reward you with the crown. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Mark the elements of this great victory: "They cried to God in the battle, and he was entreated of them; because they put their *trust* in him." "When Moses held up his hand, . . . Israel prevailed." So here. Not prayer without trust—that is unbelief. Not trust without prayer—that is presumption. Prayer and trust—that is victory.—W.

Vers. 25, 26.—Reuben's fall. We now come to the *fall* of the very people who, only a few verses before, had been so conspicuous for prayer and faith and victory. And what was the cause of it? "They went a-whoring after the gods of the *people of the land*." The world around; the pleasure-seeking, self-seeking world; the attractive, smiling, seducing world;—this drew them aside, this *stole* their hearts from God. What the *Hagarites* had failed to do, the "gods of the people of the land" did. Satan comes to God's people in one of two forms—either as a "roaring lion" or as an "angel of light." Where he cannot succeed in one way he will try the other. He came as a "roaring lion" in the form of the "Hagarites," but he failed. He then came as an "angel of light" in the "gods of the people of the land," thus they *fell*. It is the same always. Behold it in the case of good King Hezekiah. Satan tried him as a "roaring lion" in the person of Sennacherib and his threatening letter. Hezekiah threw himself on God, and triumphed. Satan next came as an "angel of light" in the form of the "letters and a *present* from Merodach-baladan, King of Babylon." Hezekiah saw not the hook beneath the gilded bait; thus he fell (Isa. xxxix. 1). And what is the commentary of the Holy Spirit on this? "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, *God left him, to try him*." Why? Only in mercy and love, "that he might know *all* that was in his heart" (2 Chron. xxxii. 31). Ah! when God leaves a man, even for a moment, there is no foreseeing to what a depth he will fall. "God *left* him"—solemn words!—"that he might know *all* that was in his heart." How little we know what a serpent-coil of evil is hidden in our hearts! "He that trusteth in *his* own heart is a fool." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries," etc. What a filthy stream! Who would trust it? Who would look into it for good? None but the fool. Trust only Jesus. Trust a Saviour's promise, a Saviour's love, a Saviour's power, but never trust your heart. Christian reader, learn

the lesson. And where are these people of God seen next? "And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul King of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser King of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day." God will chastise. His people must know the bitterness of their sin. And what strange places the sins of God's people have brought them into! Some have gone back into the world; some are seen walking no more with Jesus; some are buried in different forms of error; some are seen hankering after the world and its vanities with a fervour and anxiety of which the world itself would be ashamed; some are seen with marks and shadows in their Christian character, that *have proved* and *are proving* a sad stumbling-block to others. Yes; these are "Halah" and "Habor" and "Hara," into which their great enemy has brought them. They have been "carried away." And what has done it? Let the prophet answer: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: and we all do fade as a leaf; and *our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*" Christian reader, learn the solemn lesson. Know your heart, but only to distrust it. Trust only in Jesus. Abide in him. Only thus can you be safe.—W.

Ver. 1.—*Instability.* For the earlier references to Reuben, see Gen. xxix. 32; xxxv. 22; xlix. 3, 4; comp. xlvi. 15, 22. The joy Leah felt at Reuben's birth was not maintained as his character and disposition unfolded. The weakness of his character is fixed in a sentence by his father, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." Evidently the one act of sin to which Jacob referred in illustration did but seal the impression which Jacob previously had of his firstborn son. This subject may be effectively introduced by a picture of the aged Jacob spending his failing strength in prophetic messages to his children. These were evidently based on paternal observation of their characteristic qualities, but they involve the seer's power to discern how those qualities affect the future developments of each tribe. Compare Moses' prophecy concerning Reuben (Deut. xxxiii. 6). The figure of the water (unstable as water) is that of water boiling over, or swelling in flood, or driven up in storm; and includes sudden passion, violent impulses, lack of self-restraint, as well as uncertainty, unsteadiness. The general lessons to be learned from this recalling of Reuben to mind may be thus set forth.

I. EACH MAN HAS HIS PROVIDENTIAL PLACE. It is by no accident that men have their places in families as firstborn or younger sons, or that they belong to families of particular rank and class. These are all in the Divine arrangement. They fit into the precise endowments and possibilities of the individual, and the Divine method of his testing and culture by trial. Reuben was the firstborn, and in the faithful keeping of that place lay all the noble possibilities of his life. A man may come to occupy other places, and after failure may recover position and influence to some extent; but it should ever be deeply impressed upon us that our highest hopes and best possibilities of service to God and to our race must always depend on our recognizing, keeping, and worthily filling, *our providential place.*

II. KEEPING THE PROVIDENTIAL PLACE DEPENDS ON CHARACTER, NOT CIRCUMSTANCE. Illustrate that the firstborn of a family often loses his place, and one of the younger members becomes practically the family head, the one on whom all depend. This may occur through such circumstances as the removal of the firstborn to a distance, but more often it is due to failure in the unfolding of character. Time shows that the firstborn cannot be *relied on*, cannot carry the family burden or help to realize the family hope. So, apart from all the plottings of Jacob, Esau, by reason of failure in character, failed from the family headship; and Reuben proves himself unfitted by his untamed impulsiveness for the place of influence and authority. The birthright is not taken away from a man, but the man loses it himself, or the providential workings shift all the honour and responsibility and dignity of it on to the worthy shoulders. It is largely true that a man *wins* and *keeps* what he *deserves*.

III. THE ONE THING THAT MAKES MEN MISS OPPORTUNITY AND PLACE IS INSTABILITY. They cannot be "*steadfast, unmovable.*" So much of men's failure is not open and manifest wrong. Some of the saddest failures in life are of men who are morally good, but *weak*; men who cannot reach "*patient continuance in well-doing.*" The Apostle

James deals vigorously with this kind of failure, using the illustration of "water" or the "sea-wave" (Jas. i. 6-8). Instability may take a milder form, as "uncertainty," "inability to decide," "wavering;" or an intenser form, as is illustrated in Reuben: then it is "unchecked impulse," "tendency to passion," "failure to restrain one's self by righteous principle." But each form of the evil suffices to lose a man his place. Compare the Evangelist Mark. "Not one great action, not one judge, prophet, or leader, from the tribe of Reuben is ever mentioned in history."

IV. EXACTLY WHAT CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE DOES FOR MEN IS TO GIVE THEM STRENGTH AND CONTINUANCE. Its work is to give the soul rootage, as it were, in God, so that the growth may be steadily upward and outward. It finds a foundation on which the whole building of character, fitly framed together, may grow into a holy temple. Its message is, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable," etc. (1 Cor. xv. 58); and its models are the *heroic martyrs* who, strong in God, stand fast, and, having done all, stand.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—Birthrights and supremacies. A significant fact of the early history of the patriarchs is here brought to remembrance. It is one so curious as to carry suggestions and lessons for all the ages, and so is recorded for our instruction. By providential arrangement the tribal birthright was Reuben's; he, however, lost it through his wrongdoing, and his father shifted it from the eldest son of his first wife to the eldest son of his second but really his own chosen wife—from Reuben to Joseph. Man's adjustments of the Divine order are not always sealed by God. Jacob's were not in this case. As the years passed on, Judah came to the front, ultimately gained the sovereignty, and from this tribe came the permanent Davidic dynasty. Joseph, represented by the tribe of Ephraim, struggled, age after age, to keep the birthright place, but in vain; and in the conflict of the two tribes we may find illustration of the hopelessness of pressing mere human adjustments against the providential order. Neither the individual nor the community may ever hope to "resist God and prosper." It is ever ill work "running upon the bosses of Jehovah's buckler."

I. MAN CANNOT READJUST THE DIVINE ORDER. Yet that is exactly what we, in our self-will, are ever striving to do. Even when we know what is God's will, we try to get it twisted about so that it may at least seem to conform to our will. This is a very common but very subtle form of Christian error and sin. We know what we wish or want, so we deceive ourselves into the idea that this is what God wishes or wants for us, and fail in that simple openness to Divine lead which is the right spirit to cherish. Scripture illustrations may be found in Rebekah, whose will was to gain the birthright and blessing for her favourite son, so she took the Divine order into her own adjustment, and won those things for him by deceptions which, very properly, brought heavy penalties on her and on him. Or in Balaam, who professed to do exactly what God wished him to do, and yet evidently did what he himself planned to do, forcing from God that fatal "Go." Or in Saul, who could not simply wait God's time and the arrival of his prophet, but, arranging the Divine order according to his own self-will, must himself offer the sacrifice. The forms in which nowadays men take the ordering of their lives into their own hands may be illustrated, and, as a contrast, mention may be made of David, who, though tempted to slay King Saul, would not interfere with the Divine order, though he might easily have seemed to himself to have been only fulfilling the Divine promise. We must wait for God as well as on him.

II. MAN FINDS HIS TRUE GOOD IN FOLLOWING THE DIVINE ORDER. Not in the helplessly passive way of poor aged Eli, but in an active and loyal way, we may say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." Keble expresses the right state of mind for the child of God, in his picture of the man sanctified by affliction, "wishing, no longer struggling, to be free." The Divine order for our life may differ wholly from the order of our own plannings. It may even seem to flesh and blood painful and humiliating. Still let life unfold, and it proves the way of best blessing for us and for others through us. Let eternity unfold, and we sing through all the ages of the "good way wherein the Lord our God led us." David shows us the attitude to which the Divine order is revealed. "The *meek* will he guide in judgment, and the *meek* will he teach his way."

III. FOLLOWING THE DIVINE ORDER MAY LEAD A MAN TO HIGHER THINGS THAN HIS BIRTH PROMISED. Illustrate from Judah, and from cases of men born in the dis-

abilities of poverty, or of the weakness of hereditary disease, who have been led in God's providence to high place, powers, and usefulness. Let us find our faculty and endowment. It is the key to God's purpose in our life; let us develop it. Life will then bring to us its best. Let us but follow on along the line of our Divine endowment, and even the "least may become the first."—R. T.

Vers. 18—22.—*Man's power and God's power in war.* It was a characteristic feature of Jewish thought, and it was a fitting expression of the theocratic principle, that God was recognized as directly concerned in and related to every event, and in such a way as made him, in a very real and deep sense, the *cause* of the event. The observation of this peculiarity is necessary to the understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures, and it alone explains some of the Scripture difficulties, especially those which seem to assert that God is the author of evil, that he hardened Pharaoh's heart, sent an evil spirit to Saul, and a lying spirit into the prophets, etc. Still, admitting this general feature, there appears to be an unusual positiveness and strength about the assertions in this passage, that "the war was of God;" that "they cried to God in the battle, and he was entreated of them; because they put their trust in him." Probably the historical reference is to the "great war in the time of Saul between the trans-Jordanic Israelites and the Hagarenes, who then occupied the rich tract north and north-east of Gilead, known as the *Hauran* at the present day." A study of the map will impress the importance of the subjection of this district to the security of the trans-Jordanic tribes. The Hagarenes were "noted for their thievish habits, and were regarded as savage and warlike." We note, from these verses, that the difficulty of putting rightly together *man's working* and *God's strengthening* finds constant and ever-varied illustration in Holy Scripture, coming up to view in very unlikely places. Here the instance is a striking one, because, in the common and less thoughtful estimate of men, *war* is precisely the thing in which God is not wanted; in which the whole foreground is occupied with man's armies, man's weapons, man's skill, and man's energies, and there is plainly no room for God. The instance is an impressive one, because in such unusual circumstances we are called to learn the lesson of *trust*, and to see that man only achieves a true success when he is *strong in God*. Even in his wars man should find the principle working that is so skilfully expressed by the apostle in relation to the personal life: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 12, 13; see the form in the Revised Version). The possibility of uniting energy and trust in war-times may be illustrated in the soldiers of Gustavus Adolphus and of Cromwell.

I. **MAN'S OWN WORK IN WAR.** It is usually entered upon for reasons of state. The times bring round to some men the spirit of conquest. Nations undertake wars to secure their boundaries, to repress the encroachments of neighbours, etc.; and even in sacred wars, such as the Crusades, the real object is the securing of some human sovereignty, such as was claimed by the pope. War is the great sphere for the exercise of man's trained physical powers. And it is usual for success in war to follow the greatest army and the highest efficiency. So it is of all human things the most intensely *human*.

II. **MAN'S TRUST IN GOD IN WAR.** If the object of the war be *right*, man need never separate God from it. And, to impress this, Scripture shows us God fighting with and by means of armies; even saying distinctly, "the war was of God." We have not to decide the *right* in historical cases, which demand a fuller basis of judgment and more complete knowledge than we possess; but we must decide the *right* of any wars which we sanction, and only when assured of the right can we trust God for success.

III. **God's WORK THROUGH MAN IN WAR.** None can read the story of the race without seeing that God has used war as one of the severer agents in his providential workings for the sum total of good. And no man can read aright the "signs of his times" without finding God in battle-fields, "making the wrath of man praise him." Impress for all *right* spheres of human life the practical compatibility of *trust* and *toil*.—R. T.

Ver. 25.—*The sin of idolatry and its judgments.* In the Divine wisdom it had been planned that the idolatrous Canaanites should be wholly dispossessed, so that no rem-

nants of the race should exert an evil influence on God's people when settled in their lands. Such a plan distinctly intimates the Divine sense of the peril in which the contact of idolatry would place an unsophisticated people. And such the Israelites were, for though their fathers had known Egyptian idolatry, the race that entered Canaan had been entirely isolated in the desert districts. They failed to carry out fully the Divine plan. Some of the Canaanites were left unconquered through the hurry of the tribes to locate themselves on their allotted lands. Some were left because the people had not faith in God enough to conquer them. And these remnants became a snare and a trap to the simple people, who were easily fascinated by ceremonial and licence. We learn—

I. **THE TEMPTATION OF IDOLATRY.** From the standpoint of our spiritual Christianity, we sometimes wonder how any one can be attracted by the helpless and often hideous idols of heathen nations, or deceived by the claims of their priests; and yet the appeal of idolatry being to certain marked features of human nature, a little searching might show idolatry, in a skilful disguise, even imperilling our spiritual Christianity, and it is not quite certain that any of us could claim the right to "cast the first stone." To what in man does idolatry make its appeal? 1. *To the sensuous element.* We want everything brought within the sphere of the senses, and we only consider that we *know* what the senses can apprehend. So it is ever attractive to man to offer him his God as within the grasp of his senses. He will delude himself into the idea that the sense-form only helps him to realize the spiritual and invisible Being, the great Spirit, but almost inevitably the sense-hold becomes a slavery, and the thing seen is accepted as the reality. 2. *To the aesthetic element*, or taste, the love of the beautiful. A spiritual and invisible God asks from his creatures a spiritual and invisible worship, with a material expression held within careful limitations. A God within sense-limits only asks sense-service, and man satisfies himself with making it ornate, elaborate, and the perfection of taste, according to the sentiment of the age. Illustrate from refined Greek humanism. 3. *To the active element.* Idolatry has something for its votaries to do, many prayers to say, pilgrimages to take, sacrifices to bring, etc., good works by which to win favour. 4. *To the sensual element.* All idolatrous systems are more or less immoral, and give licence to the bodily lusts and passions. The *purity* of the claims of spiritual religion constitute, for man as he is, one of its chief disabilities. Show how Canaanite idolatry illustrates these, in its influence on the Israelites.

II. **THE SIN OF IDOLATRY.** Take the case of nations *outside* the covenant; what may be known of God by them declares him as above his creation, and naturally claiming first and sole allegiance (see St. Paul's speech at Athens, and Rom. i.). Take the case of the nation *within* the covenant; a special aggravation is its sin against *light* and against its own pledge. Idolatry is a rash sin, for it sins against the basic commandment, which requires us to love God first. Its sinful character is sufficiently revealed and declared in its corrupting and detaching influence. It "brings forth death."

III. **THE JUDGMENT OF IDOLATRY.** This is always *spiritual*; seen in the deterioration of the nations that serve idols. It is usually also *material*, and is seen in the mental, moral, and governmental slavery of the nations where idol-gods are sought. Divine judgments often—we can hardly say always—take their character from the sins which they judge. This the idea of Dante's "Inferno." Close by pressing St. John's counsel, "Little children, keep *yourselves* from idols."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VI.

Vers. 1-3.—The tribe of Levi is now taken. The first three verses prepare the way for running rapidly down the line of high priest descent, from Aaron's son Eleazar to Jehozadak, who is reached at the twenty-fifth name from Levi, though not necessarily the twenty-fifth generation, as there appear (vers. 11-13)

to be some omissions. Nor are all the names which are given those of high priests, for the genealogy of Jehozadak did not always pass through such.

Ver. 1.—This verse gives the three branches of Levi, and is in agreement with the enumeration of them in Gen. xlvi. 11 and Exod. vi. 16, viz. Gershom, Kohath, and Merari. We have not the third parallel passage in the place of

mention of the other tribes (Numb. i. 47—54), but it is compensated for somewhat later (Numb. iii. 14—20).

Ver. 2.—The second son, *Kohath*, rather *Kəhath* (כָּהָתּ), Hebrew, and so Septuagint and Vulgate), is at once singled out, in order to get at the priest line. He was one of the travellers with Jacob into Egypt, was probably about twenty years the junior of Joseph, lived thirty years after his death, and attained the age of one hundred and thirty-three years, after a residence in Egypt of about one hundred and fifteen years in all. The Kohathites are expressly mentioned in their sacred duties in the time of David (ch. xv. 5—8), and in the time of Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxix. 12—14). The four sons of Kohath are next instanced, in order to get another step nearer the clear beginning of the priest line. This is done in the person of the oldest brother, *Aram*, who became father of *Aaron* and *Moses* and *Miriam*.

Ver. 3.—Once more, *Aaron* is singled out, and *Eleazar*, the third of his four sons, fixes the exact channel of descent required.

Ver. 4.—*Eleazar*. From this name inclusive follow the twenty-two, which terminate with *Jehozadak*, who indeed never attained himself to the office of high priest, but was son of *Geraiah*, last high priest before the Captivity, and father of *Jeshua*, high priest, who returned with *Zerubbabel* from the Captivity. It has been pointed out by Lord A. C. Hervey that the name *Jehozadak* is of the same meaning with *Zedekiah*, the last king before the Captivity; and that *Jeshua* is the same in meaning with *Joshua*, the leader of the tribes into Canaan. The two elder brothers of *Eleazar*, viz. *Nadab* and *Abihu*, died without issue (Lev. x. 1; Numb. iii. 4, 32; xx. 28; ch. xxiv. 1—3). It is somewhat obscurely said that the sacred office remained in the family of *Eleazar* till, in the person of *Eli*, it passed awhile into that of *Ithamar*, his brother (1 Kings ii. 26, 27; Josephus, viii. 1, § 3), to be recovered again in the *Zadok* of our ver. 9 (ch. xxiv. 3, 4). *Phinehas*; a memorable man (Numb. xxv. 7—13; Josh. xxii. 10—33; Judg. xx. 28; Ps. civ. 30, 31; which *Grove* well compares with Gen. xv. 6; Rom. iv. 3). *Abishua*; only mentioned in this chapter and *Ezra* vii. 1—5. *Josephus* (viii. 1, § 3) asserts that he it was who was succeeded in the high priesthood, not by any one of his own descendants, but by *Eli*, till *Zadok*, in the time of *David*, all the intervening members of the *Eleazar* family being private individuals. But no reliance can be placed on this assertion, for see *Josephus* again (v. 11, § 5).

Vers. 5—7.—Of the five succeeding names, *Bukki*, *Uzzi*, *Zerahiah*, *Meraioth*, *Amariah*, it may be said that they reappear in the list of *Ezra* vii., but that little or nothing else is

known of them. Lightfoot ('Temple Service,' iv. § 1) supposes that the change of priesthood family to *Ithamar* took place after *Meraioth*. But it is just as probable that the gap between *Abishua* and *Eli*, or possibly even between *Phinehas* and *Eli*, was filled by holders of the high priest office unknown by name to us.

Ver. 8.—*Ahitub*. With this name begins the light again. *Ahitub*, *Zadok*, *Ahimaaz*, and *Azariah* are of frequent mention in the Books of *Samuel* and *Kings*. *Ahitub*, here and elsewhere plainly given as father of *Zadok*, seems to be given as father of *Meraioth* in ch. ix. 11 and *Neh.* xi. 11, and grandfather of *Zadok*; and in both passages is termed "ruler of the house of God"—an expression probably equivalent to high priest, as *Azariah*, high priest in the reign of *Hezekiah*, is also so described (2 Chron. xxxi. 13). The recurrence of the two names *Ahitub* and *Zadok* in vers. 11 and 12 is very possibly the result of some error; and it is in favour of such a supposition, in some form of it, at all events, that in that place, where, including *Shallum* (or *Meshullam*), only three steps are found, several more seem to be required—the period one of some one hundred and eighty years, and filled in the list of *Judah*'s kings by as many as nine in succession. On the other hand, it is open to question whether the recurrence of the names *Ahitub* and *Zadok* be not legitimate. And this may then be the solution of ch. ix. 11 and *Neh.* xi. 11, as above, with their insertion of *Meraioth*—still other names being absent which would make up the requisite number of generations. *Zadok*. The earliest glimpse we get of him is in ch. xii. 28, where he is introduced as "a young man mighty of valour," who now casts in his lot with *David* at *Hebron*, on *Saul*'s death. In 2 Sam. xv. 24, 29, 35, we find him and *Abiathar* the recognized priests. In 1 Kings i. 7, 8, we find him true to *David* when *Abiathar* joined *Adonijah*—the punishment of the latter and the reward of the former being recorded in 1 Kings ii. 27, 35, respectively. Up to that time it is evident that *Abiathar* had precedence in rank over *Zadok*. His death is not recorded, but it must be assigned to a date previous to the dedication of the temple, from the account of which (1 Kings viii.) his name is entirely absent. The last allusions to him are in 1 Kings iv. 2, 4; in the latter of which verses (specially coupled as the name is with the deposed *Abiathar*) the notice is probably as merely *historical* as it certainly is in the former. This same verse states that *Azariah* was "the priest," and that he was son, i.e. grandson, of *Zadok*, proving, with very little doubt, that the explanatory parenthesis of our ver. 10 should follow the *Azariah* mentioned in the previous verse.

Ver. 9.—**Ahimaaz.** The first important notice of him is found in 2 Sam. xv. 36, and the last in 2 Sam. xix. 29. He is not to be identified with Solomon's "officer" in Naphtali (1 Kings iv. 15). **Azariah.** As above said, it is almost without a doubt after this Azariah (1 Kings iv. 2) that the parenthetical comment of next verse should be read. Again, this Azariah must not be identified with him of the time of King Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 17, 20), who must have been nearly a century later, and was contemporary with Isaiah, Joel, and Amos.

Ver. 10.—Of **Johanan** and **Azariah**, his son, nothing can be found with any certainty. It is presumable that they were priests in the reigns of Abijah and Asa.

Ver. 11.—**Amariah.** High priest in the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xix. 11; see Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' *sub voce*, 2). A step ascertainable as this helps to keep the line and chronology steady amid surrounding obscurity.

Ver. 12.—(See above on ver. 8.)

Ver. 13.—**Shallum**, called in ch. ix. 11 and Neh. xi. 11 *Meshullam*. There are at fewest fifteen persons of this name. The present is named as ancestor of Ezra (Ezra vii. 2). **Hilkiah.** There are seven persons of this name. The present was the celebrated one of them all; and from three chief circumstances: (1) for the finding of the "book of the Law in the house of the Lord" (2 Kings xxii. 8); (2) the zealous spirit with which he joined in the reformation under Josiah (2 Kings xxii. 14—20; xxiii. 4—27); (3) the observance in his high priesthood of the Passover, in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign (2 Chron. xxxv. 1—19).

Ver. 14.—**Azariah.** The third occurrence of this name in this list. This person is found again in Ezra ii. 1, but is wanting in Neh. xi. 11. **Seraiah**; found also in Neh. xi. 11, in a list which omits the preceding Azariah, and in Ezra vii. 1. The end of his high priesthood and of himself is recorded with that of Zephaniah (2 Kings xxv. 18, 21), and (not the Seraiah, "*the quiet prince*," of Jer. li. 59—64) he is also spoken of in Jer. lii. 24—27. He was high priest in the time of Zedekiah.

Ver. 15.—**Jehozadak.** He did not share the violent end of his father, nor did he attain his father's high priest office, but lived to the end a captive (see note on ver. 4). Where this name occurs in Haggai and Zechariah, it is the same in the Hebrew as here, though Englished in the Authorized Version as *Jos-dech*. Where it occurs in Ezra and Nehemiah, the shorter form of Jozadak is found in the Hebrew as in the Authorized Version.

Vers. 16—19.—These verses have a re-enumeration of the three sons of Levi, and

differ from the enumeration of ver. 1, in being followed by the sons of *each* of these three, and afterwards by the line of descendants from *each*, instead of by the sons of only one, Kohath, and *his* descendant in only one stem, the high priest stem, and with only one object. All these names agree with Exod. vi. 17—19 and Nunb. iii. 17—20 (comp. also Numb. iii. 21—36 with xxvi. 57—60), with the trifling exceptions already alluded to, in the Hebrew spelling of Gershom and the Authorized Version spelling of Shimei and the Authorized Version *Mahali* of Exod. vi. 19. The latter half of ver. 19, according to the Hebrew, should rather refer to what has preceded and be a "subscription," though it might best suit the connection to regard it as introducing what was to follow, and as being a "superscription." Bertheau holds with the former of these views, Keil with the latter.

Vers. 20, 21.—(A) These verses apparently give seven lineal descendants of Gershom, through his eldest son *Libni*. The question is whether this list of seven is part of the longer list of thirteen from Gershom (vers. 39—43), terminating with Asaph; and it seems impossible to decide the question satisfactorily. From the occurrence of the name Shimei in this latter, though in the wrong place, viz. after *Jahath* in the descending order, instead of before him, some think, Keil and Zöckler among them, that it is a line from Shimei, the *brother* of Libni, and second son of Gershom. If this be so, the occurrence of three names, the same and in the same order, is a thing to be remarked, though possible enough in itself. But if not, then either the names *Joah*, *Iddo*, *Jeaterai*, in the former list, must be interchangeable with *Ethan*, *Adaiyah*, *Ethni*, respectively in the latter (a thing which the similarity of the Hebrew letters might render credible), while the Shimei of ver. 42 is omitted from ver. 20, and the Libni of ver. 20 from ver. 43; or the one list must pick up some links and leave others, and the other do likewise, whilst those taken *the same by both* are in the minority. This last supposition may be the more probable, though not free from difficulty. **Zimmah.** Beside the uncertainty of the identity of this Zimmah with the same name in ver. 42, it is very remarkable that we find a Zimmah, *also father of a Juah*, in 2 Chron. xxix. 12; also in this same passage we find three other reproductions of a similar kind—*father and son*—of what have first been found in this sixth chapter, viz. "Mahath, son of Amasai" (ver. 35); "Joel, son of Azariah" (ver. 36); "Kish, son of Abdi" (ver. 44). It seems as though the individual descendant was quoted in these

instances by the name of the ancestor at a certain point.

Vers. 22—28.—(B) These verses give descendants, probably twenty-one in number, from Levi, through his second son, Kohath, to Joel, eldest son of Samuel and (ver. 33) father of Heman. The descendants of Kohath through his eldest son, Amram, have been given from vers. 3—15. But the descendants now to be spoken of are through another son, here called Amminadab, a name not appearing among the four of ver. 2, but apparently standing for the Izhar of that verse. For he is said to have a son Korah, by whom, indeed, the genealogy moves on, while in vers. 37, 38, and Numb. xvi. 1, Korah is said to be the son of Izhar. Without the occurrence of this clue, we should have been at a loss to tell who Amminadab was, as we are now at a loss to explain the unexplained substitution of this new name. The Vatican Septuagint has Amminadab, while the Alexandrine has altered to Izhar, probably deeming the other name a mere error.

Vers. 22, 23.—Korah (comp. Numb. xvi. 27, 32, 33, with xxvi. 9—11). From Exod. vi. 24 we also learn that the three next in lineal succession to Korah, were Assir, Elkanah, and Ebiasaph, or Abiasaph; though Elkanah and Assir are omitted from ver. 37, in the ascending line.

Vers. 24—28.—Tahath. From this name onwards to the end of ver. 28 we must have recourse to the reversed list of vers. 33—37, in order to make out our way. Even then we shall scarcely have a chain of all the links; *e.g.* there is no evidence here (as there is in the case of Amminadab above) that Uriel and Zephaniah designate the same person. The lists may be brought, however, into pretty close harmony without any violent suppositions or substitutions, *thus*: Tahath, Uriel, Zephaniah, Uzziah (*i.q.* Azariah), Shaal (*i.q.* Joel), Elkanah, Amasai, Ahimoth (*i.q.* Mahath), Elkanah Zophai (*i.q.* Zuph), Nahath (*i.q.* Toah, Tolu, 1 Sam. i. 1), Eliab (*i.q.* Eliel, Eliu, 1 Sam. i. 1), Jeroham, Elkanah, Samuel (*i.q.* Shemuel), Joel (1 Sam. viii. 2, which distinctly gives Joel as firstborn son, and supplies the explanation of the Vashni here by expressly mentioning Abiah as "his second" son).

Vers. 29, 30.—(C) In ver. 19 the two sons of Merari, *viz.* Mahli and Mushi, are given. Here one of them, Mahli, is repeated, with six descendants, of no one of whom have we any other information. From comparison of Numb. iii. 20 and xxvi. 58 there can be no doubt that Mahli and Mushi were brothers, each of whom founded a family. The descending line of Mushi, unalluded to here, comes to the surface in vers. 44—47.

Vers. 31—48.—In the early verses of this

section we may notice, if not the first beginning, yet some of the earliest crystallization of the forms of religious services. It was given to David to settle the ark after its travels through the wilderness, its sojourn in various places since then, doubtless always within the care of some Levitical family (except when taken by enemies, 1 Sam. iv. 11; v. vi.), and in especial its prolonged twenty years' sojourn at Kirjath-jearim (1 Sam. vii. 1, 2; 2 Sam. vi. 1—19; ch. xiii. 3—14; xv. 1—3; xvii. 5). It now had rest, though its place of rest was only within "curtains" (2 Sam. vii. 2; ch. xvii. 1), *i.e.* in a special separate tent prepared for it by David, which tent was probably the suggestion, and as it were the nucleus, of the coming grand temple itself—the house of God. The event was naturally one of great joy and thanksgiving, of which David himself was the chief leader (2 Sam. vi. 17—21; ch. xvi. 1—3); but it appears also that it furnished the occasion of appointing fixed choir conductors, leaders of the service of song" (ch. xvi. 4—7, 37, 41, 42; xxv. 1—7).

Vers. 32.—Instances full of illustration of this ministering . . . with singing and waiting on their office are found in 2 Chron. v. 12; xxix. 26—31; xxxv. 15, 16.

Vers. 33.—We have now the name and pedigree of each of the three chief singers or musicians (their duty was both vocal and instrumental) of David's appointment, beginning, according to the analogy of ver. 2, *supra*, with Heman, the descendant of Kohath, instead of Asaph from Gershom. So the place of Heman was still the place of honour, in the centre, with Asaph on the right and Ethan on the left (vers. 39, 44). Heman is the twenty-first according to this list (vers. 33—38) after Levi, but the genealogy is indistinct (see above, vers. 22—28) between Shemuel and Assir, and according to Hervey ("Genealogies of our Lord," p. 214), Heman comes fourteenth after Levi. This Heman is to be distinguished from Heman the "son of Zerah" (ch. ii. 6), and with but little doubt, therefore, from Heman the Ezrahit (Zerahite) of Ps. lxxxviii. On the other hand, a theory has been suggested by Lord Arthur C. Hervey which might reconcile the two. He supposes that if Heman the Kohathite (or his father) had married an heiress of the house of Zerah, he might have become reckoned in the line of Zerah as well as in that of Kohath.

Vers. 39.—Asaph is called brother of Heman, either as brother in office or generally as relative in the degree of cousin by many removes. He stands fourteenth in line of descent after Levi, while Ethan (ver. 44) stands thirteenth. If the line of Heman (as given in vers. 33—38) were correct, it would force on us the conviction that there

are several omissions in these two lines; but if these are correct, we must conclude that there are unwarranted additions in the other. On the names of Asaph's ancestors, see notes on vers. 20, 21. From 2 Chron. xxix. 30 it seems plain that Asaph was himself a composer of psalms, and not simply either the musician or rehearser of those of David.

Ver. 44.—*Ethan*. This passage and ch. xv. 19 are the leading passages for this name Ethan. But in succeeding references (and they are not a few) to the three chief leaders of song, the name appears as Jeduthun; unless, as seems scarcely credible, two different persons are designated. The occasion and significance of the alteration of the name are not stated, however, and elude detection so far. In 2 Chron. xxxv. 15 the title of "king's seer" (נָבָן) is added to the name Jeduthun, which is variously spelt (יְהֻדָּתָן; יְהֻדָּתָן; יְהֻדָּתָן). This arrangement of chief singers, one from each of the three branches of Levi's family, lasted unbroken to Josiah's reign (2 Chron. xxxv. 13); and the representatives of Jeduthun, at all events, are mentioned in the time of Nehemiah (Neh. xi. 17, 18). *Kishi*. The most frequent form of this name is Kish (קִשׁוֹ), equivalent to the Vulgate *Cis*, if, indeed, the form of this verse and that of ch. xv. 17, *Kushaiyah* (קְשָׁיָהָה), are not merely the fruit of a corrupt text.

Ver. 48.—The all manner of service, from that of the three "leaders of song" on their "cymbals of brass" (ch. xv. 19) down through the other Levitical grades, is fully illustrated in many places (ch. xv. 18-24; xvi. 37-42; xxiii. 2-32; xxv. 1-8; xxvi. 1-26).

Vers. 49-53.—These verses allude to the more special functions of "Aaron and his sons," as they are here called, i.e. his lineal descendants (vers. 4-15; Ezra vii. 2-5), whose names, stopping at Ahimaaz, the eleventh generation, are the same with those of vers. 3-8. The manifest inference is that the present enumeration, stopping with the name of one contemporary with David (2 Sam. xv. 27), was borrowed from tables of the date of David, and not of the date of the Captivity (ver. 15).

Ver. 49.—The altar of the burnt offering (Lev. i. 3-17). The altar of incense (Exod. xxv. 6; xxx. 1-7, 7-9, 34-38; Lev. xvi. 12). Most holy (Lev. xvi. 12, 14, 15, 17, 20). An atonement for Israel (Lev. xvi. 3-10; xxiii. 26-32; Numb. xxix. 7-11).

Ver. 50.—*Eleazar*. The third son of Aaron (by Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, and descended from Judah through Pharez) is the son whose descendants are given here,

inasmuch as he was appointed chief of the Levites (Numb. iii. 32); ministered as a priest with his brother Ithamar, even before the death of Aaron; and succeeded him as high priest (Numb. xx. 28). It was in Eleazar's family that the high priesthood remained (as above) till the time of Eli, who was descended from Ithamar, and it returned again to the line of Eleazar in Zadok, fulfilling the intimation of 1 Sam. ii. 30.

Vers. 54-81.—The writer returns upon his steps to give the cities and dwelling-places of the Levites, beginning with the priestly members of the Kohathite line (vers. 54-61), then taking those of the Gershomite (ver. 62) and Merarite lines (vers. 63-65) in order; and again in the same order disposing of the members not priestly (vers. 66-70; 71-76; 77-81) of the same three branches.

Vers. 54-61, 64-70.—*And these are their dwellings according to their enclosures in their territories.* בְּנֵרֶב means the settlements of whatever people in question, surrounded and protected by whatever fence or defence customary. For theirs was the lot is more intelligible with the addition of the word "first," supplied in Josh. xxxi. 10, i.e. *theirs was the first lot*. The whole drift of the present passage, with the remainder of the chapter, is made entirely plain by Numb. xxxv. 1-8 and Josh. xxi. 1-10. But the omission and the alteration of individual names of places occasion some delay. Our ver. 55 is given somewhat more fully in Josh. xxi. 11; our ver. 56 is identical with Josh. xxi. 12; and our vers. 57-60 correspond substantially with Josh. xxi. 13-19, but from this latter source we are glad to supply the two names *Juttah* and *Gibeon*, without which we cannot add up correctly the thirteen cities of ver. 60. Also in Joshua, our *Hilen*, *Ashan*, and *Alemeth* appear as *Holon*, *Ain*, and *Almon* respectively, although in regard to the intermediate name of these three the places cannot be accepted as identical, for they are mentioned side by side in Josh. xix. 7 and in ch. iv. 32, but we must admit an error involved. Ver. 56 (see Josh. xiv. 14; xxi. 12). Ver. 61 seems to be an anticipation of vers. 66-70, with which verses, if we incorporate it, we shall obtain substantially the same results as are found in Josh. xxi. 5, 20-26; but again we are glad of the latter source to supply for us the two places, *Eltekeh* and *Gibbethon*, necessary to enable us to count up the ten cities of our ver. 61, while our *Jokmeam*, *Aner*, and *Bileam* appear as probably the corrected readings of *Kibzaim*, *Tanach*, and *Gathrimmon* respectively in Joshua. The sons of Kohath... left (ver. 61), the residue (Authorized Version, ver. 66), the remnant (ver. 70),

point (as above) to the *non-priestly* descendants in the Kohath line. Summing up, we see that the Kohathite *priests* had thirteen cities from the allotments of Judah and Simeon and Benjamin, and the Kohathite *non-priests* had ten, from Ephraim, Dan, and West Manasseh. One might detect in all this some germ of the more modern parochial system, so far at least as regards the distributed residence of a clerical and ministerial order, though not with sacred buildings similarly distributed.

Ver. 62.—The twenty-three cities that belonged to the sons of Kohath are now followed by the thirteen due to the sons of Gershom, taken from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and half Manasseh. The fact only is stated here, the details being supplied in vers. 71—76. And it is easily to be seen that, as from the most important tribes were levied the cities for Levites first in precedence, so the same principle is observed to the end.

Ver. 63.—The distribution of cities to the third branch of Levi's family, that of Merari, now follows. They are selected, four from each of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Zebulun (Josh. xxi. 7, 34—40).

Ver. 71.—Golan was one of the three cities of refuge east of the Jordan (Josh. xx. 8), the other two being Bezer, of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead, of the tribe of Gad. Ashtaroth, in its previous history, had been closely connected with Og King of Bashan (Deut. i. 4; Josh. ix. 9, 10; xii. 4, 5; xiii. 12). It is called Beeshterah in Josh. xxi. 27.

Ver. 72.—Kedesh. There were three places of this name. 1. Kedesh, at the extreme south of Judah (Josh. xv. 23; xix. 20, 21), perhaps the same with Kadesh-barnea (Josh. xv. 3). 2. The Kedesh of this verse, perhaps the same with the Kedesh of Josh. xii. 22; it is called Kishon in Josh.

xxi. 28. 3. The Kedesh of ver. 76, i.e. Kedesh in Galilee, one of the cities of refuge in the tribe of Naphtali (Josh. xix. 37; xx. 7; xxi. 32; Judg. iv. 6—10). Daberath (Authorized Version, Dabareh, Josh. xxi. 28); mentioned as on the boundary of Zebulun in Josh. xix. 12.

Ver. 73.—Ramoth; called in Josh. xxi. 28, 29, Jarmuth; a place of which nothing else is known, but possibly one with Remeth (Josh. xix. 21). Anem; probably the Engannim of Josh. xix. 21 and xxi. 29, and perhaps a contraction of the name.

Vers. 74—76.—Mashal, Hukok, Hammon, Kirjathaim, are found as *Mishal, Helkath, Hammoth-dor, Kartan*, in Josh. xxi. 30, 31, 32; xix. 35.

Ver. 77.—Unto the rest of the children of Merari. Since none have yet been spoken of as having received their cities, we find the explanation of these words in their order in Josh. xxi. 34, “Unto the families of the children of Merari, the rest of the Levites.” To our list here, Jokneam and Kartah (Josh. xxi. 34) need to be supplied, and Rimmon and Tabor here appear (Josh. xxi. 35), there as *Dimnah* and *Nahalal*.

Ver. 78.—Bezer. The full description of the place is “Bezer in the wilderness, in the land of the Mishor” (Deut. iv. 43), and “Bezer in the wilderness, in the Mishor,” i.e. “the plain,” or as some, “the downs” (Josh. xx. 8). This, as mentioned above, was one of the three cities of refuge east of the Jordan. Jahzah (Authorized Version, Josh. xxi. 36, *Jahazah*).

Ver. 79.—The two names of this verse, with the two of the preceding, i.e. all the four names of the cities of Reuben, are absent from their proper place in the list in Josh. xxi. in the Hebrew Textus Receptus and the Vulgate, though found in Josh. xiii. 18.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 10, 15.—*Two high priests.* Among the sons of Levi the family of Aaron was the most conspicuous, inasmuch as the Lord selected this family for the priestly office. The high priest was always of Aaronic blood. And the succession of high priests could no more be omitted from the chronicles of Israel than the succession of popes from those of Rome or the series of Archbishops of Canterbury from those of England. We select two high priests for special notice.

I. THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD IN NATIONAL PROSPERITY. Azariah executed this very important office during that part of the reign of Solomon which saw the dedication of the magnificent first temple. This was the very culmination of the splendour of the Hebrew monarchy, and the office and duties of the national pontiff would be encompassed with peculiar glory. As the religious representative of the nation, Azariah had sacred functions to discharge, especially on the day of atonement, when the sins belonging to the people's prosperity were brought and confessed before the Lord, and favour shown to the sacrificing and repentant nation.

II. THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD IN NATIONAL ADVERSITY. Jchozadak, as in the succession, nominally filled the same office when the Jews were carried into captivity. He shared the lot, the exile, of his countrymen. It was well that he should go with the others and rather share the fate of the nation, than remain in Jerusalem to fulfil the form of his office. Where the nation was, it became its religious head to be also.

III. THE CONJUNCTION OF THESE TWO HIGH PRIESTS TEACHES A VALUABLE LESSON. Ministers of religion should dwell among the people, partake their lot, interest themselves in their concerns, and be their leaders in praise, in obedience, in submission. Touched, like their Master, with the feeling of the people's infirmities, they are thus able to "rejoice with those who do rejoice, and weep with those who weep." In such sympathy lies their true, their spiritual and legitimate, strength. Not as lords over God's heritage, but as shepherds, sharing the lot of their flock, may they follow Christ, serve the people, and do the will of God.—T.

Ver. 31.—" *The service of song.*" The ministry of psalmody, in its definite organization, was instituted by David. The occasion of this was when the ark was placed, as in a resting-place, in the tabernacle of the congregation. The arrangements then made were the germ of the more elaborate temple service under Solomon. From the time of David, "the sweet singer of Israel," "the service of song in the house of the Lord" occupied an important position in the religious observances of Israel. To justify this, consider that—

I. SINGING IS THE NATURAL EXPRESSION OF EMOTION. The outburst of joy, the fervour and rapture of love, the pathos of sorrow, find their form and utterance in song.

II. MAN'S NATURE MAKES SONG THE SUITABLE EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS FEELING. The highest form of human feeling impels to the expression vocally appropriate. Psalmody, especially choral and congregational psalmody, forms the most inspiring vehicle of religious gratitude, adoration, and praise.

III. SCRIPTURE HISTORY RECORDS SEVERAL DEVELOPMENTS OF PSALMODY. The lyric outbursts of joy which took place when the Lord confounded Pharaoh and delivered his chosen people, were the first recorded instances. But David himself was the true leader of psalmody, both Hebrew and Christian. Christ and his disciples "sang an hymn," and Paul and Silas sang praises at midnight in the gaol of Philippi. The early Christians were accustomed to sing God's praises in their social assemblies.

IV. SCRIPTURE REPRESENTS THE SERVICE OF SONG AS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. Presuming that the service, the homage, the love, are sincere, the inspired writers summon all God's people to join in thus celebrating his praises. "Sing ye praises; praise God, all ye people," is the admonition of the psalmist; and the apostle thus directs us: "Is any merry? let him sing psalms."

V. SCRIPTURE SANCTIONS THE CONSECRATION TO PSALMODY OF LABOUR, ART, AND DEVOTION. We find that, under the old dispensation, there was a regular ministry consecrated to "the service of song." It would be strange if it were lawful to spend time, money, strength, skill, upon exercises intended to give pleasure to men, and at the same time unlawful to offer aught to God save that which cost us nothing. God will have our best; and when we have offered this, of his own have we given him.

VI. SCRIPTURE REMINDS US THAT THE EFFICACY AND ACCEPTABLENESS OF THE SERVICE OF SONG DEPEND UPON THE WORSHIPPER'S SPIRITUALITY AND SINCERITY. The form without the substance, the art without the spirit, the song without the love and faith it should express,—these are vain and worthless. Let us offer acceptable sacrifices, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks unto his Name.—T.

Ver. 32.—" *Waiting on their office.*" The Levites were the ministers of the tabernacle and the temple, whose business it was, in subordination to the priests, to attend to the appointed services, sacrifices, ceremonies, and festivals. Of these, certain families were selected for the conduct of the musical part of the religious services. David, himself a poet and a musician, set apart these families; the members of which, from his time forward, were trained for "the service of song in the house of the Lord." Clothed in white garments, some performed upon cymbals, psalteries, harps, and other instruments of music; whilst others lifted up their voices, and sang the praises of him who is "good, and whose mercy endureth for ever." It is recorded that, upon certain great

occasions in Jewish history, as, for example, when Solomon dedicated his temple, when Hezekiah cleansed the same building and restored the dignity of its services, and when Josiah observed a solemn Passover, these musical attendants took a prominent part and rendered an effective service in the sacred solemnities that were observed (2 Chron. v. 12; xxix. 27—30; xxxv. 15). Perhaps nothing at once more simple and more significant can be said of any men or any class of men than is here said in description and to the credit of the families of Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun: “They waited on their office according to their order.” The language may fairly be taken as applicable to all true servants of God, to all true friends and followers of Christ.

I. PROVIDENCE APPOINTS FOR EVERY ONE OF US AN OFFICE TO FILL, A SERVICE TO RENDER. 1. Mark the *divinity* apparent in every human life. It is only within limits that we choose or that others choose for us. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.” “Our times are in his hands.” 2. Mark the *individuality* of every man’s vocation. The Levites did not perform the priests’ service; and amongst the Levites all were not appointed to “the service of song.” So is it with us and our several positions in the Church and in the world. Nothing is weaker and more foolish than to say, “How well I could fill the position and do the work of my neighbour!” It is your duty to which you must look, that there may be no lack of service through your failure.

II. GOD EXPECTS US TO RENDER OUR APPOINTED SERVICE UPON A PROPER SYSTEM AND IN AN ORDERLY WAY. The Levites had their regulations to which they were obedient. And the same is true of us all. “Order is Heaven’s first law.” We have not only a duty to fulfil—we have to fulfil it at the right time and place. Qualities necessary for efficiency in ordinary business or professional life are requisite in the service of God. Take these three: 1. *Diligence*. 2. *Method*. 3. *Perseverance*. Without these it is scarcely possible to glorify God in a practical and active life. Without these we shall lose our self-respect, and we shall lose our influence over our fellow-men.

III. FOR SUCH SERVICE WE ARE RESPONSIBLE TO THE DIVINE LORD AND JUDGE. 1. The watchful eye of God is always upon us. 2. By providential appointment, careful fidelity makes its mark upon our character. 3. “We must all of us appear before the judgment-seat.” “The fire shall try every man’s work, of what sort it is.”

IV. IN OUR ENDEAVOURS TO RENDER SUCH SERVICE, WE HAVE A MODEL AND A MOTIVE IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. 1. Consider how Christ “waited upon his office.” He came to do the will of God. “He took upon him the form of a servant.” He was found faithful. It was only when he could say, “It is finished!” that he consented to die. In life and in death it was his meat and drink to do his Father’s will. Thus he left us an example. 2. Consider that his humiliation, his cross, are the inspiration of the service and obedience of his people. It is the love of Christ which constraineth us. Do not suppose that Divine love cannot work according to the principles of human order and system; these are the machinery, but that is the motive.

APPLICATION. We have here a rebuke to the irreligious, and a summons to a better life. We have also an admonition and encouragement to those who are endeavouring to serve their Saviour, and glorify their God.—T.

Vers. 48, 49.—*Levites and priests.* These two verses contain a brief account of the offices of the two orders of ministry in the Jewish Church.

I. LESSONS PECULIAR TO THE OLD COVENANT. Nothing was more prominent or important in Israel than the provision alluded to in this passage. We are reminded: 1. That amongst the chosen people there was a consecrated tribe, and within this a consecrated family. 2. That thus a provision was made for perpetual temple worship and appointed sacrifices. 3. That, in obedience to these prescribed ordinances, Israel abode beneath the favour of Jehovah.

II. LESSONS GENERALLY APPLICABLE TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. 1. Order and decency are becoming in the service of a righteous and holy God. It is possible to regard the form and neglect the substance, but it is also possible to despise the form and so to lose the substance. 2. In the service of God, the most menial office is honourable, whilst the loftiest office can never be executed by man otherwise than imperfectly and

unworthily. 3. Under the Christian dispensation, all believers are ministers and priests, daily serving in God's spiritual temple, and offering, through the Divine Mediator and Intercessor, spiritual and acceptable sacrifices. Every family and every individual has an appointed office and ministration.—T.

Ver. 57.—*The city of refuge.* Hebron was one of the six cities of refuge, which were provided to shelter the manslayer from the wrath of the avenger of blood, and thus to check the savage lawlessness of a warlike people in a primitive state of society. They are, in one passage of the New Testament, regarded as emblematical of the provision made in Christ for the security of the penitent and returning sinner. There is suggested—

I. **A CASE OF NEED AND DANGER.** The cause of the peril and alarm is sin. And the righteous Law and retributive government of God render the case of the sinner one serious in itself and its issues. This appears from the gospel admonitions to *repentance*.

II. **A PROVISION OF MERCY AND WISDOM.** As the city of refuge was appointed for the innocent manslayer's escape from vengeance and death, so the guilty sinner is the object of the Divine compassion which has provided in Christ a safe and eternal shelter. In the Divine Redeemer is refuge from sin and condemnation, is the favour and life of God.

III. **AN ACTION OF FAITH AND ENERGY.** The city was of no use except the imperilled Israelite fled unto it for safety. So with Christ, whose almighty sufficiency avails for those, and those only, who accept him and shelter themselves in his riven side. They are saved who have "fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel."

IV. **A DIVINELY PLEDGED SECURITY FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST.** The Jewish Law assured of safety those who made use of the provision for refuge. And the Divine word and faithfulness are pledged to those who confide in Christ, that they shall never perish, but shall have eternal life.

V. **A TRUE GOSPEL.** It is the office of the Church of the Redeemer both to warn sinners of the danger to which they are exposed and to point them to the one only Refuge provided by Divine wisdom for their security and peace. It is a refuge accessible to all and sufficient for all, and there is no reason in the heart of God why any poor sinner should remain outside this refuge and spiritually perish.—T.

Vers. 1—30.—*Lessons from lists; or, a sermon in names.* Here is a number of names; they belong to men of varied characters and different careers, though all of them were children of privilege, most of them in a high degree. We learn—

I. **THAT THERE IS A VAST DIFFERENCE IN THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF PRIVILEGED MEN.** We might suppose that men who have come under the same class of influences would be much like one another in spirit and behaviour. But such a supposition would be a great mistake. It is true that there is much of human nature in us all, and that the best men have their failings while the worst have their redeeming points; but it remains true that between man and man, having the same advantages, there is often a great gulf found. In the same list of names of the sons of Levi we have Moses and Samuel, who were holy among the holy, and also the sons of Samuel, who accepted bribes and perverted judgment (vers. 3, 28). It is painful to think that, while among the children of privilege may be found some that are like God himself in their spirit and their life, there are others in whose heart the basest passions dwell, and whose lives are pestilent and shameful. It is sadly possible for those that are "exalted to heaven" in privilege to be "cast down to hell" in guilt and condemnation.

II. **THAT THERE IS A CLOSE INTERMINGLING OF GOOD AND BAD UPON THE EARTH.** This is a list of men belonging to different generations, but we are reminded by contrast of the truth that good and bad are contemporaneous and closely intermingled. Here the wheat and the tares grow together. Dwelling beneath the same roof, sitting down to the same hearth and table, working in the same shop, writing at the same desk, walking the same street, are the holy and the profane, the pure and the unclean, the generous and the selfish, the wise and the foolish. 1. What a reason for watchfulness and prayer! 2. What opportunity for usefulness!

III. THAT OUR RECORD WILL BE WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF GOD AS WELL AS IN THE LIVES OF MEN. Not much is written in the Book of God respecting most of these; we know nothing of them but their names. A deeper obscurity than this will be our portion; not even our names will go down one century, certainly they will not descend to thirty centuries. We need not regret that; but we shall do well to remember: 1. That not only our names but our actions are written in some imperishable record in God's unerasable handwriting. 2. That our lives are written and are repeated in the hearts and lives of men whom we have influenced. Fame is rare enough and vain enough. Lasting work, abiding influence, is common enough and serious enough.—O.

Ver. 31.—“The service of song in the house of the Lord.” The “house of the Lord” is the place whither we go primarily to worship him. So, at least, it should be. We may have learnt to go thither in order to enjoy sacred oratory or even for some less honourable purpose. The primary end of service in the sanctuary is the worship of God; and the service of song should be regarded as one most important feature of public worship. In sacred song we present ourselves to God in every attitude which our souls can assume toward him, and if we went and sang together with the heart as well as with the voice, and then returned, we should have rendered an acceptable offering and gained a valuable blessing. If “the service of song in the house of the Lord” be perfect, or as perfect as it is possible to make it, there will be—

I. AN APPROACH TO GOD IN EVERY VARIETY OF SPIRITUAL ACCESS. In our hymns: 1. We shall *adore* him, as when we sing, “Great God, how infinite art thou!” etc., or “My God, how wonderful thou art!” etc. 2. We shall *praise and bless* him, as when we sing, “Oh for a thousand tongues to sing,” etc. 3. We shall *confess our sin* to him, as when we sing, “Oppressed with sin and woe,” etc. 4. We shall *make supplication* to him; for there is no essential distinction between “praise” and “prayer.” In the latter we frequently bless God for his mercies, while in the former we often supplicate him for his blessing, as when we sing, “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,” etc. 5. We shall *reconsecrate ourselves* to him, as when we sing, “My Saviour, I am thine,” etc., or “Lord, in the strength of grace,” etc. 6. We shall *intercede with him* on behalf of others, as when we sing, “O Spirit of the living God,” etc.

II. A SACRED SUMMONS, AS IN HIS HOLY PRESENCE, TO FIDELITY AND DEVOTION. We shall call upon ourselves and one another to illustrate our truest and highest convictions as Christian men and the soldiers of Christ, as when we sing, “Stand up, stand up for Jesus!” etc., or “Ye servants of the Lord,” etc. We shall have holy and elevating fellowship with the whole Church of Christ, as when we sing, “Come, let us join our friends above,” etc.

III. SPIRITUAL AS WELL AS VOCAL PARTICIPATION. Our service of song will be only a hollow sound, unmusical in the Master's ear, if we rise no higher than the harmony of blending voices. There must be living, spiritual sympathy. All *souls* must join together as well as all *tongues*. In this great matter of the service of song, as in all other things, “the Lord looketh upon the heart.” We must “make melody in our hearts” unto him, or the sound of our song will rise no higher than the roof of our building; it will not reach his throne.

IV. UNIVERSAL PARTICIPATION. Choral singing may find its place in the new dispensation as it did in the old; but it must take the “lower room.” Congregational psalmody is the desideratum, the perfect thing, the standard at which to aim. “Every creature in heaven and on the earth” did John hear saying, “Blessing, and honour, and glory,” etc. (Rev. v. 13); “A great multitude, which no man could number . . . stood . . . and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God,” etc. (Rev. vii. 9, 10). Let the Church on earth anticipate the Church in heaven, by every voice, the voice of a great multitude, being heard in the accents of praise, participating in “the service of song in the house of the Lord.” This will be: 1. A source of joy to each participant. 2. A service to fellow-worshippers. 3. An acceptable offering to the Saviour.—O.

Vers. 32—81.—Religious culture. The promised land was to be a well-cultivated country in more ways than one. Not only was its soil to be well tilled, but its population was to be well trained. Harvests of grain were to be gathered from its fields,

and fruits of holiness were to be seen in the lives of its sons and daughters. Excellent and ample provision was made for this religious culture. It was to be, as it should be everywhere and always—

I. ATTRACTIVE IN FEATURE. The tabernacle service (ver. 32), and subsequently the temple service, was made inviting and enjoyable with sacred song (ver. 32). The singers sang the praises of Jehovah, and care was taken that they should not be absent from their post. Music, pleasant and attractive, was to make the heart more glad when the Israelites were summoned to go up to the house of the Lord. We are not only at liberty, but are under obligation, to draw as large a company as we can attract to the sanctuary by making its services agreeable and inviting. Good reading, good singing, appropriate prayer, simple and short enough to be entered into by the people, earnest and faithful exhortation, provision for all bodily needs,—these are rightful and desirable things; they should be *religiously* provided.

II. WELL ORGANIZED. “They waited on their office according to their order” (ver. 32). Every necessary arrangement was made that, when one course had concluded, another should begin: the temple would never be without those who were wanted to take up what others were laying down. Things must not be left to the impulse of the hour or to happen as they may: everything is to be carefully and systematically arranged in the service of God, in the culture of the soul.

III. VARIED IN MANNER OF SERVICE. “The Levites . . . were appointed unto all manner of service,” etc. (ver. 48). These were (1) of many kinds; and they were probably (2) of many degrees of importance. Certainly there were many that were menial, and there must have been some that were valuable and high. The priests, we know, had nearer access to God, and engaged in the more sacred offices (ver. 49). In the Church of Christ there must be these varieties in kind and in degree. We can only cover the whole ground of sacred service, of religious culture, by dividing the work into many parts, and by some taking higher while others take lower posts. Let us feel that (1) any work done for God and at his bidding is highly honourable; (2) those who are apportioned to the simpler offices are least burdened with responsibility; (3) they who undertake the most sacred functions have especial need of human devotedness and Divine direction.

IV. BASED ON POPULAR INTELLIGENCE. Here we have the cities through which the Levites were distributed. They were to be scattered throughout the land, to be mingled with every tribe, in order that they might *impart religious instruction* to all (Deut. xxxiii. 10; and see 2 Chron. xvii. 9; xxx. 22; xxxv. 3). It was their function to “teach the good knowledge of the Lord,” to make known and understood the Law of God. The service of Jehovah was to rest on popular intelligence. Ignorance is not the mother of devotion; it is the fruitful parent of superstition and folly. Religion builds on knowledge, thrives on intelligence. It is the aim of those who wish for a land well cultivated for God that in every town and every smallest village the instructor in Christian truth shall be found: 1. Making known the will of God in Christ Jesus. 2. Interpreting and explaining, so far as may be, the mind of the Divine Master. 3. Enforcing his will by earnest words, and by a blameless, beautiful life.—C.

Vers. 31—48.—Priesthood and service. In the rather lengthy genealogy of the priesthood in this chapter, there is much instruction. The children of God have each their appointed service in the vineyard of the Lord. We have here four kinds of service—(1) *The service of rest* (ver. 31); (2) *the service of song* (ver. 31); (3) *the service of waiting* (vers. 32, 33); (4) *the service of work* (ver. 48). This is the Divine order of every believer’s service.

I. THE SERVICE OF REST. Christ Jesus, the true Ark, rests in his own finished work on the cross. “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, *sat down* on the right hand of the throne of God.” His people find their rest also in that finished work. “We which have believed do enter into rest.” This is the *first* in the Divine order. There can be no service of *song* till we know the service of *rest*. You cannot praise God till you know your sins are forgiven. You have nothing to praise him for. This, then, is the first service in which you are called to engage—the service of *rest*. Rest in Jesus, rest in his finished work for *your* soul, rest in his full and free and everlasting salvation. Reader, have you thus found rest in Christ?

II. THE SERVICE OF SONG. After the service of *rest*, you can enter on the service of *song*. And what is that song? “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;” “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen;” “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” These are some of the notes in that service of song which they can sing who have entered on the service of *rest*. Reader, can you sing them?

III. Next is THE SERVICE OF WAITING; for “They also serve who only stand and wait.” Indeed, it is one of the highest services in which the redeemed soul can engage. What is this service of waiting? It is that spirit that waits upon God continually, in each day and each hour looking up and saying, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” It is renouncing our own will, our own way, our own inclination, our own pleasure, and as “the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God.” The cloud may tarry long, but wait for it. Waiting time is not only never lost time, but it is most blessed discipline for the soul. “For the vision is yet for an *appointed* time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry” (Hab. ii. 3). Reader, are you waiting thus upon God?

IV. Lastly, we have THE SERVICE OF WORK. Mark what is said of this: “Their brethren also the Levites were appointed unto *all manner of service* of the tabernacle of the house of God” (ver. 48). Yes, “*all manner of service*.” There are all *kinds* of work in the great spiritual temple of God, and work *for all*. And this work may be of the very humblest kind. One day the disciples may be summoned to hold converse with Moses and Elias, and to behold their Saviour transfigured. What a privilege! some will say. A few days afterwards they are sent to unloose a colt and foal—to do what had all the appearance of an act of robbery! Yet it is the same Master who sends on both errands. Some of the eminent ones of Israel, while passing through the wilderness with the tabernacle, had to spend whole years in taking care of pins, others in taking care of curtains, some of boards, and bars, and pillars, and sockets (Numb. iii.). Yet all was God’s work. It was to the Lord they did it, not to man. Look not at the work, but at the Master. It is the Master that makes the meanest service grand and noble. “*Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*” This makes the “cup of cold water” grand. Jesus!—this makes a *tattered thought* glorious. Jesus!—this ennobles every work, makes the meanest honourable, the smallest great. And the mightiest work that has not this motive is lighter than the small dust of the balance. Reader, never forget the Spirit’s order of service: resting, praising, waiting, working.—W.

Vers. 14, 15.—*A witness in a man’s name.* In the midst of a long list of names the compiler of this record stops, as if one name set him thinking. The name was one with a significant meaning; yet it was one that seemed very strange when taken in the light of the man’s history. This name, *Jehozadak*, meant “Jehovah is righteous;” but the man who bore it “went into captivity, when the Lord carried away Judah and Jerusalem.” “It has been noted as remarkable that the heads of both the priestly and the royal stock carried to Babylon should have had names (Zedekiah and Jehozadak) composed of the same elements, and assertive of the ‘justice of God,’ which their sufferings showed forth so signally.”

1. THE WITNESS OF A SIGNIFICANT NAME. This was a singular recurrence to the ways of an older time, when children’s names were given as embodying circumstances of birth, feelings of parents, etc., and when names were changed to express new relations of the life. In those earlier times names became elements of Divine revelations and agents of Divine witness and teaching. *Ab-ra-ham* taught men *by his name*, and so did *Is-ra-el*. Other instances of revival of this witness by names may be found in the prophetic names given by the later prophets to their children, such as *Immanuel*, *Shear-jashub*, and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*. It is interesting to add that, among the glories of the future held out before the faithful, is this, “*And I will give him a new*

name.” So Jehozadak had his mission in his name. Down into captivity he went, but in all his intercourse with the humbled and captive people, he pleaded with his name, saying, “Jehovah is righteous.” And so we may learn that the least thing about us, a matter as seemingly unimportant as our name, may be taken up into God’s service, and used by him. Therefore we “present our bodies” (our entire selves) “a living sacrifice.”

II. THE POSSIBLE CONTRAST BETWEEN A MAN’S NAME (OR THE PROMISE OF A MAN’S BIRTH) AND HIS CIRCUMSTANCES. It looked to be a most unlikely thing that a man whose very name declared that “Jehovah was righteous” would ever go into captivity, and be remarkable for a suffering and humiliated life. And yet this is the contrast often observed. It puzzled Asaph and the writer of Job and the writer of Ecclesiastes, in the olden time. It puzzles God’s people still. Men born in sunshine spend lives in the ever-deepening shadows; and sufferers for life, lying in their sick-beds, are the noblest of all witnesses that “Jehovah is righteous.” Illustrate by the exquisite reference in the life of Dr. Arnold of Rugby, to the beautiful witness for God made through long years by his invalid sister. Can there be Jehovah’s righteousness seen even in the sufferings which come upon men as the natural fruitage of their own wrong-doings? for that is precisely the case with Israel crushed under the Babylonian tyranny. The presence of Jehozadak and Zedekiah among the captives declared that there *can be*. Look below the train of causes of which captivity seems the natural effect, and we may see God’s *purposes* being accomplished, God’s *laws* being vindicated, and God’s *judgments* being executed. Ever we may turn away from the mere course of history and details of events, and watch the “Judge of all the earth doing right.” If, however, the suffering of the good troubles us, we may find rest in an appeal to the *great case*—our Lord suffered. He was not merely “smitten of God and afflicted.” There was Divine *righteousness* in the affliction. He was man’s Sinner, and judged for others. Here is a firm foundation-truth, then, which no earthly appearances or strange human experiences can shake. Proclaim it once again, and proclaim it ever—“Jehovah is righteous.”—R. T.

Vers. 31, 32.—*The ministry of song.* To King David is traced the ordering and arranging of the service of song in connection with Divine worship, but we are hardly justified in regarding him as the originator of sacred music and song. Miriam’s chant, and the songs of Moses, Deborah, Hannah, etc., indicate previous culture of both the gifts of poetry and of music, and the relation in which both stood to public acts of worship. In the earlier Mosaic system there was the clanging of cymbals and blowing of trumpets on special occasions, but probably the connection of intelligent words of trust and praise with the musical chant, in which the worshippers may unite, led by a trained choir, must be traced to David. It is one of his great achievements that he helped to make, Divine worship more interesting and attractive, lifting it from the sacrifice of *things* to the sacrifice of praise, the utterance to God of thankful, trustful, and loving feelings; man offering to God the sacrifice of his own emotions, and finding such sacrifice accounted a “sweet savour.” It will at once be recognized that the *poetical* and *musical endowments* of David prepared him to serve his God and his fellows in this particular ministry. And his own practice and culture of the gifts enlarged his preparation, and so his fitness for the work, when the providential time for it came. The service of song was commenced in the new tabernacle erected by David on Mount Zion, but probably not until after the ark was restored and made to rest within it; and the service was greatly extended and elaborated to fit in with the more gorgeous surroundings of Solomon’s temple. Many of the psalms were composed for use in the public worship, and are arranged for solo and chorus, or for answering choruses. “David put the musical part of the service under the direction of Asaph. Distinctions are made between the different kinds of instruments for which different psalms were suited, indicating that bands composed of stringed instruments, and other bands composed of wind instruments, were employed. We have also notices of trained men and women singers. The singing was managed by responses, or by solo and chorus, many of the psalms lending themselves readily to these forms of music.” Taking the references in these verses as suggestive of a general truth, we dwell on—

I. THE FACT THAT SONG IS A DIVINE GIFT. Among the pagans it was so recognized,

as it was also in David's time. It is singular to find how small a place poetry and music took in the apostolic Church. The power of song is found characteristic of individuals, and it often follows in family lines, as is illustrated in the cases of Asaph and Heman. It becomes, for the individual, the entrusted talent, the inspired gift, the faculty which is to be put out to the Lord's use, the speciality which gives a man his niche and his work.

II. SUCH A GIFT MAY BE CONSECRATED TO THE DIVINE SERVICE. It has its distinctly fitting place in relation to public service; and the modern developments of worship give it a most prominent and important place. This is true of all forms that public worship takes, and may be precisely illustrated in relation to each form. The importance of song as *attracting* to the house of God, as *interesting and spiritually benefiting* those engaged in worship, and as finding *audible expression* for devout feeling, should be fully enforced. It therefore becomes the duty of all who have the gift to lay it on the altar of God's service in the sanctuary.

III. SUCH A GIFT MAY BE USED FOR THE COMFORT AND HELP OF OTHERS. There is a sphere for the ministry of song in our homes, in society, at sick-beds, in visiting the poor, and among the children. Illustrate by references to Philip Phillips, the singing pilgrim, and to Ira Sankey, the companion of D. L. Moody.

IV. SUCH A GIFT MAY BE TRAINED AND SET IN ORDER FOR THE MOST EFFICIENT SERVICE, both in public worship and in private spheres. We are responsible to God for faithful and wise use of such a gift, and for the efficient culture of it. Impress on all who have the endowment the duty of using it for all gracious and loving and helpful ends in all the spheres where they may be set.—R. T.

Ver. 48.—*The honourableness of lesser service.* It is a familiar thought to the Christian that what is done to others is really done unto Christ. Upon it rests our Divine Master's observation, and to it he gives his Divine approval. And we are permitted even to consider that such approval may rest upon so small and so simple a thing as the offering of "a cup of water." We have the corresponding teaching from the older dispensation suggested in this verse. What was done in the old tabernacle service was done unto God, and was accepted of him. Common work, porters' work, scavengers' work, all the wide circle of commonplace Levites' work, servants' work, was as truly service to God as the offerings of priests and the chantings of the singers. Two things may be fully opened and contrasted.

I. MAN'S ESTIMATE OF THE GREAT AND SMALL. To him the great is that which makes a large figure to the eye, and man has in every age a set of arbitrary standards by which he judges the great and small.

II. GOD'S ESTIMATE. To him its mere world figure and relation are of little significance. Things are judged according to their capacity for expressing character, quality, principle, virtue. To God a thing is miserably *small* that can offer no sphere for the utterance of a soul's love, and loyalty, and obedience, and unselfishness, and trust. So often to God man's *high* things are *low*, man's *first* things are *last*. Nothing has *character* in itself. It gains character only by the spirit in which it is done. Then we ask what spirit is it which can give *greatness* or *littleness* to our human actions. There are certainly these two: (1) *loyalty to God and the right*; and (2) *service to others*. St. Paul argues that the "lesser services" have the honourable stamp of superior necessity and usefulness. Porters' work in the temple bore directly on *decency* and *cleanliness*, and cultivated the idea of the *pure* and the *orderly* in God's worship. As well do without priests as without Levites. "Careful less to please thee much than to serve thee perfectly."—R. T.

Ver. 49.—*The constant work of atonement.* It is only to the atonements of the Mosaic system and the general truths which they suggest that we propose here to direct attention. The subject of the Divine atonement for sin is too large and many-sided for efficient treatment in any one homily or sermon; and yet there is the danger of producing an imperfect or erroneous impression when any piece or portion of the great subject is isolated for consideration. The word "atonement" in the Old Testament means a "covering over," and "hiding from view;" and it is applied to some sacrifice whose *acceptableness* covers over and hides from view the *unworthiness* and

transgression of him who brings it, or to some act, such as that of Phinehas, which, because it vindicates the Divine honour, Law, and righteousness, is regarded as covering over iniquity, and making possible the pardon of the transgressors. But some changes passed in the connotation of the term, so that the New Testament Greek equivalent became the word "reconciliation," which appears to regard the word as *at-one-ment*, but does not carry over the idea of *covering* transgression by a sacrifice or a loyal act. The appointment of Aaron and his sons for this particular work emphasizes the fact that, under the older dispensation, there was *constant need for atonement*. Every individual needed that it should be made for him again and again, and every year a great public atonement was made for the sins of the people. The reason appears to be this: every fresh act of wilfulness and sin imperilled the *standing* of the individual and the nation as within the Divine covenant, and brought down upon them all the *penalties* of the broken covenant—penalties involving even the surrender of life. It would help greatly to clearness of view if we recognized that *atonement* always bears relation to *man's standing before God*, and not to man's personal cleanliness or *cleansing*. The constant atonement *covered* the sin which broke the covenant-relations, and restored, for the individual and the nation, the old covenant-conditions. The daily burnt offering was a daily atonement, or vindictory act, which covered the people's sin and set them again in full covenant-standing. The *private* burnt offerings did the same thing for the individual. And the "day of atonement" did it, in a sublime way, as a grand national spectacle, for the due impression of the entire nation. As carried over into Christianity, and gaining its moral and spiritual aspects, we must duly conserve the features illustrated in the Old Testament atonements. These are: 1. *Man's lost standing with God by reason of his transgressions*. This is fully argued by St. Paul in the earlier chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. Beyond and besides other effects of human sin, this must be fully recognized—it sets us all out of our true standing with God, out of the covenant-relation which is conditioned by our obedience and faithfulness. 2. *Man's standing recovered on the ground of something offered to God that is infinitely acceptable to him*. In Judaic symbol, the spotlessly pure and absolutely complete animal presented entire. In Christian history, the offering of the person of the Son of God and Son of man, the Lamb without blemish or spot, on the altar of the Divine will. 3. *The full acceptance of the atoning sacrifice, by the offerer, as the representation to God of his own will and purpose*. This declared the sincerity of a Mosaic atonement; this makes Christ's offering to be *for us*. There is, however, for us no need of a constantly renewed atonement. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews argues this from the surpassing dignity and worth of the atonement offered by Christ, and from the relation in which he, the Divine Son and Divine man, stands both to God and to us. But that one sacrifice is our constant daily pledge to God that we will keep in the covenant of holy service to him. Every morning to name Christ's Name is to do, in effect, what the Jew did every morning by sharing in the burnt offering. It is to declare our standing within the *new covenant*, and to pledge ourselves afresh that we will be true and faithful to all its responsibilities and claims.—R. T.

Ver. 54.—Carnal provisions for spiritual men. The references here made to the provisions for the support of the priests, and the allotment of cities for their residence, are designed to confirm their claim for reinstatement in their properties on the return from the Captivity. Priests and Levites had a right to this independent support by the appointment of God and the good will of the people they served. Levi had no proper tribal allotment. This tribe was separated for the religious service of the whole nation. Its material sustenance was made dependent on the people it served, and each tribe gave up certain of its towns for the habitation of Leviitical families, and certain lands to provide them with necessary food. So we have introduced for consideration, the dependence of religious teachers on those they serve in spiritual things for the due supply of their material wants—a subject to which St. Paul gives careful consideration, urging that they who "preach the gospel" may reasonably expect to "live of the gospel." Those engaged in spiritual ministrations properly expect to receive *carnal* ministrations.

I. THE DIVINE DESIGNATION OF MEN TO SPIRITUAL WORK. Seen in Aaron and his descendants, in the prophets, in the Lord Jesus Christ himself, in apostles, and

equally in the Christian Church. A designation recognized in (1) *the demand for such work*; (2) *the Divine endowment of men for such work*; and (3) *the call of men to undertake such work*, by the inward impulses of the Holy Spirit, by the leadings of Divine providence, and by the recognition of fitness on the part of our fellow-men. Spiritual work has in every age formed a sphere of its own, and those engaged in it have been wisely separated from common business responsibilities. Good reasons are found in (1) the absorbing character of spiritual duties; (2) the prolonged and continuous preparations which such duties demand; (3) the relation of efficient spiritual work to personal soul-culture; (4) the exigencies of human life making demands on spiritual men at all hours and seasons; (5) and the tendency of thorough occupation with spiritual things to unfit men for the stress and toil necessary to achieve success in business life. Some forms of spiritual work (as Sunday school, visiting, etc.) are found compatible with a life amid ordinary carnal scenes; but it is well that some should leave "serving tables," and give themselves "to the Word and prayer."

II. SUCH DESIGNATION TO SPIRITUAL WORK DOES NOT RELIEVE MEN FROM CARNAL NECESSITIES. The whole circle of personal and family needs remains; and God has never seen fit to employ any miraculous means for the supply of such needs for Levites, prophets, or apostles. The exception seems to be Elijah. But even God's own Son, the world's spiritual Redeemer, might not make stones bread, though he felt hunger, thirst, weariness, and want.

III. THE RESPONSIBILITY RESTS ON MEN TO ARRANGE THE CARNAL PROVISIONS. God sends us back on two principles: (1) *brotherhood*; (2) *gratitude for blessing received*. Each should find for the other what that other lacked. Those who are constantly receiving spiritual blessings are bound to acknowledge them by kindly and thoughtful gifts and provisions. Such should ever be arranged on liberal and generous scales, and such provision is sure to prove a means of grace to those who provide. St. Paul's teaching and example on this matter are opposed. He distinctly claimed full temporal support for all Christian teachers; and he refused such aid in his own case for such sufficient reasons as make his case an *exception* that proves the rule.

Show wherein lies the distinction between the spiritual and the carnal, and carefully urge that it must not be unduly pressed, or the spiritual man will exaggerate his separateness, and the carnal man will feel freed from all claim to be spiritual. The carnal man is to become spiritual, learning how to be "*in* the world, and *not* of it;" and aid in attaining this the spiritual man is called to provide. So there is to be mutual helpfulness.—R. T.

Vers. 57, 67.—*The doctrinal witness of the refuge cities.* (See Exod. xi. 13; Numb. xxxv. 6, 11, 14; Deut. xix. 1-10; Josh. xx.) The severity of the Mosaic laws and institutions has often been dwelt on, but a careful estimate of the prevailing sentiments of surrounding nations, in those early times, would rather impress us with the *mercifulness* of Judaism, and the ways in which customs which pressed with undue severity on individual rights and liberties were toned and modified. In the East two things are familiar which appear strange and unworthy to us: (1) irresponsible governments, usually involving tyrannous dealings; and (2) a very light estimate of the value of human life. The mercifulness of Judaism is plainly seen in the Mosaic appointment of the refuge cities. The laws relating to murder are clearly defined, and the different forms of the crime are duly recognized. Premeditated murder is distinguished from unintentional homicide, and the man who accidentally kills another is secured until he can prove the circumstances of the accident. But in the arrangement made for him Moses wisely retains the older sentiment of justice, which called upon the nearest relative of a slain man to act as his *blood-avenger*, or *goēl*. Amongst the other nations, as the Arab tribes of the present day, "any bloodshed whatever, whether wilful or accidental, laid the homicide open to the *treacherous* revenge of the relatives and family of the slain person, who again in their turn were then similarly watched and hunted by the opposite party, until a family war of extermination had legally settled itself from generation to generation, without the least prospect of a peaceful termination." Moses allowed the *goēl* still to pursue; but the homicide had his chance of escape. Cities conveniently situated on both the west and east of Jordan were made refuge cities, and the roads to them were kept clear. Once within the gates

a calm consideration of the circumstances was assured; and only if proved guilty of wilful murder could the man be delivered up to the *goel*-avenger.

I. THE SOCIAL WORKING OF THE REFUGE SYSTEM. Its influence may be shown in: 1. Its cultivation of a worthier sense of *justice*. 2. Its teaching as to the relation of *motive* to crime, such motive giving the act of crime its serious quality. 3. Its tendency to relieve the individual from the thought of executing his own vengeance. 4. Its claim to have a fixed authority for the settling of all social laws, and their vindication by due punishments. A worthy and strongly enforced legislative system lies at the very foundation of the peaceful order and stable progress of every nation. The element of *personal passion* must be removed if punishment is to be wisely administered; men must be willing to put aside their own avengings if social order is to be secured. Nations need to be very careful to secure purity in the administration of justice.

II. THE RELIGIOUS SUGGESTIONS OF THE REFUGE SYSTEM. These will differ according to the school of thought to which the preacher may belong. From the evangelical standpoint, the city of refuge symbolizes Christ. The avenger represents the law-penalty under which the sinner comes, which seeks his death. There is made by Christ Jesus a free and open road to himself, the Refuge. But the sinner must himself arise and flee, running into the shelter of the ever-opened gates. When "in Christ," if a due examination be made of his sins, the all-sufficing answer which secures eternal safety is this: "Jesus has already borne the penalty of them all, and the Law cannot revive its satisfied claim." There is "no condemnation" for those who have "fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in the gospel."

More generally treated, we may learn: 1. The *Divine righteousness* in affixing a natural and necessary *penalty* to every act of sin. 2. The *fallen state of man*, in that he so readily makes holy *avenging* into passionate *revenging*. 3. The *mercifulness* of the Divine administration, in that God puts man's passions under wise restraints; and secures the fair, considerate, and honourable treatment even of the sinner.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1.—The great tribes of Judah and Levi being now passed, as well as the minor ones of Simeon, Reuben, and Gad, we reach the sons of Issachar. Issachar was Jacob's fifth son by Leah (Gen. xxxv. 23). In the list of Gen. xlvi. 13 our *Puah* (פּוּאֵה) appears differently spelt as *Phuvah* (פּוּבָה), and *Jashub* is found as *Job*, which is corrected by the Samaritan Codex to *Jashub*, and this reading the Septuagint follows. In the other parallel passage (Numb. xxvi. 23) the *Phuvah* form obtains, but the other names are the same as here. *Tola*. We read (Judg. x. 1, 2) of another person of this name, who judged Israel twenty-three years, at Shamar, in Mount Ephraim, and who is called "the son of *Puah*, the son of *Dodo*, a man of Issachar." This is a good instance of how the use of the same names, though in different order, clung to a tribe or family through long periods.

Ver. 2.—The six sons of *Tola* given here are stated to be the six heads of the house at the time of the census of David (2 Sam. xxiv. 1-17). The verse further states that the *Tolaites* had grown to number at that time twenty-two thousand six hundred,

and as this fact is not stated elsewhere, it is pretty clear proof that the compiler had other sources of information in addition to those possessed by us.

Ver. 3.—*Five*. The name of *Izrahiah's* sons count up only four; but if, with four of Kennicott's manuscripts, the words, and the sons of *Izrahiah*, should be omitted, the five will count right for sons of *Uzzi*, and the little clause beginning this verse will correspond exactly with that beginning ver. 2. The Syriac, however, does not omit "and the sons of *Izrahiah*"; but alters the numeral "five" to "four."

Ver. 4, 5.—The meaning of these verses, especially of the former of them, is not quite evident. This seems to say that as the *Tolaites* were in David's time twenty-two thousand six hundred, so the *Uzzites* taken from among them (or the "sons of *Izrahiah*," as the case may be) numbered thirty-six thousand additional. But were not the *Uzzites* included in the *Tolaites*? and did not the figure thirty-six thousand embrace the accumulated numbers, whilst the balance of fifty-one thousand necessary to make up the eighty-seven thousand of ver. 5, was drawn from all the other branches of the Issachar tribe? This is not the view, however

generally taken, and if the numbers of ver. 2 and 4 are distinct, the balance needful for ver. 5 will, of course, be twenty-eight thousand four hundred. It cannot be denied that this view is favoured by the special description applied to these Uzzites, or Izrahiahites, as bands of soldiers for war; their disposition and their training constituting possibly the reason of their being singled out for further description from among the sons of Tola. The statement of the total number of the tribe of Issachar in David's time is wonderfully corroborated by the two censuses of Moses—Numb. i. 28, 29, fifty-four thousand four hundred; and Numb. xxvi. 23—25, sixty-four thousand three hundred. The total of Issachar, four score and seven thousand, is a good proportion of the aggregate total of all the tribes, given (2 Sam. xxiv. 8, 9) as eight hundred thousand. Grove, however, adds all the above numbers, and makes thereby Issachar's total (see Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. 901 b) one hundred and forty-five thousand six hundred, which seems disfavoured by the numbers at the second census of Moses. At the time of this census Issachar came third of all the tribes, only Judah and Dan taking precedence. The bands of soldiers for war. This expression culminates in the word (מִנְצָרָה) "bands," which is applied (Gen. xl ix. 19) to Gad, and almost invariably to the irregular but special bodies of fighting men of the nations round (Authorized Version, ch. xii. 23 is incorrect, the Hebrew word being different). The examples are too numerous to quote, but some of the more important instances are 2 Kings vi. 23; xiii. 20; xxiv. 2; Hosea vi. 9; vii. 1.

Ver. 6.—The sons of Benjamin; Bela, and Becher, and Jediael, three. We have four passages for our authorities as to the sons of Benjamin, and it is not altogether easy to bring them into verbal harmony. They are Gen. xlvi. 21; Numb. xxvi. 38—41; the present passage; and ch. viii. Our present passage mentions three sons, as though they were all, and immediately proceeds to their posterity. The list in Genesis mentions ten, of whom, however, we know (Numb. xxvi. 40; ch. viii. 3, 4) that three, Naaman, Ard, and Gera, were grandsons, being sons of Bela, under which circumstances the order in which the two former stand in Genesis is remarkable. Again, while Becher is given as the second son in both Genesis and our present place, he is not mentioned in Numb. xxvi. 38—41 and in ch. viii. 1. Ashbel, who in Genesis is given as the third, is expressly called the second son. Among the Ephraimites, however (Numb. xxvi. 35), a Becher, with his descendants the Bachrites, is mentioned, and it is not improbable that, by marriage, the family

were at *that time*, for manifest reasons of inheritance and possession, reckoned in this tribe, though by blood of the tribe of Benjamin. This subject is skilfully discussed by Lord A. C. Hervey (Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. 175). Lastly, Jediael of this passage and ver. 10 is not found in Genesis, in Numbers, or in our ch. viii. This name seems to have superseded in our passage the name Ashbel in Genesis, though it is impossible to speak certainly. It cannot be supposed to designate the same person, but rather a descendant in the same branch, whose family had come to importance "in the days of David."

Ver. 7.—And the sons of Bela. The first and last of the five (*descendants or heads of families*) here given, viz. Ezb'n and Iri, are not found in previous places among Benjamite families, but are found (Gen. xlvi. 16; Numb. xxvi. 16) among Gadite families. It would seem that by David's time they had become in some aspects ranked among the Benjamites, though not originally of them.

Ver. 8.—Joash. This name, of which nothing else is known, is spelt with an *ayin*, not with an *aleph*, as are the names of the seven other persons called (Authorized Version) Joash. Jerimoth. This name is spelt with a *tsere*, and not, as the Jerimoth of ver. 7, with *khirik*. All the names of this verse must be regarded as those of heads of families, and not the literal sons of Becher.

Ver. 10.—Bilhan; Jesh. Both of these, as well as the name Bela, are of Edomitish origin (Gen. xxxvi. 5, 18, 27, 32).

Ver. 12.—Shuppim . . . and Huppim. These two, called (Numb. xxxvi. 39) "Shupham and Hupham," and ch. viii. 5 "Shephupham and Huram," are mentioned (Gen. xlvi. 21) as among those who went down with Jacob into Egypt, are called "Muppim and Huppim," and are described as "sons of Benjamin." They are here described as sons of Iri, or Ir, which would make them great-grandsons of Benjamin, a thing impossible. Hushim, the sons of Aher. Nothing can be said with confidence of either of these names. The Hushim of Gen. xlvi. 23 (called Shulim, Numb. xxvi. 42) are expressly given as a family of Dan, while the Hushim of ch. viii. 8, 11, is manifestly the name, not of a family, but of an individual, and that a woman. Bertheau takes the opportunity of urging, in connection with this name, that *Dan* is not entirely omitted in our work of *Chronicles*! But his foundation is surely far too slender to build upon. Bertheau and Zöckler (in Lange, 'Alt. Test.') would translate *וְאֶת* "another," or "the other," instancing not very pertinently, Ezra ii. 31, and referring

the allusion to Dan. He also thinks that this is corroborated by the expression, “the sons of Bilhah,” in the next verse.

Ver. 13.—The sons of Naphtali. In an order quite different from the otherwise parallel passages (Gen. xlvi. 24; Numb. xxvi. 48—50), the tribe of Naphtali is taken. Naphtali was the second son of Rachel's handmaid Bilhah, and in order of birth the fifth son of Jacob, and was of course more closely allied to Dan, Ephraim, and Benjamin. The family was distinguished for its spirit throughout its history. At the Sinai census it numbered fifty-three thousand four hundred fighting men (Numb. i. 42, 43); but at the close of the wandering through the wilderness its numbers had become only forty-five thousand four hundred. Its territory in the north, largely mountainous, bounded by Asher, Zebulun, and Manasseh, was some of the finest, and covered the district afterwards called Galilee, “the cradle of the Christian faith, the native place of most of the apostles, and the home of our Lord” (Grove). The slight difference in the spelling of Jahziel in Genesis, and of Shallum in Numbers, may be noticed. The following are interesting references to Naphtali in one or another portion of its history:—Deut. xxxiii. 23; Josh. xx. 7; xxi. 32; Judg. i. 33; v. 18; ch. xxvii. 19; Ezek. xlvi. 3, 4, 34; Matt. iv. 15; Rev. vii. 6. It played a considerable and prominent part also in the conflicts with Titus and Vespasian, when the days of Jerusalem were numbered.

Ver. 14.—The sons of Manasseh. The tribe of Manasseh has been partly treated of in ch. v. 23—26, viz. those of the tribe who inhabited Gilead and Bashan. Here those who inhabited this side Jordan are treated of. And it is very difficult to give any coherent account of the differences of this passage when compared with Numb. xxvi. 28—34 and Josh. xvii. 1—4. In these places six families, or heads of families, are noted to only two, or at most three here, viz. Ashriel, Shemida, and perhaps Abiezer (*i.e.* Jeezer, Numb. xxvi. 30; comp. with Josh. xvii. 2). The opening clause of this verse also is unmanageable as it stands. One way of reducing it to coherence would be to supply the words “his wife” between whom and bare, the similarity of the Hebrew letters of which to those of the Hebrew for “whom” might possibly account for the loss of it. The parenthesis about the *concubine* would then read with emphasis. But there is not the slightest reason to suppose there was such a wife. Another way would be to read the concubine as the mother of Ashriel, and prefix a conjunction, “and,” to the second “bare;” *i.e.* “and she bare;” or, “she bare also Machir.” But it seems pretty plain from Numbers and Joshua that Ashriel was not

strictly a son, but only descendant of Manasseh; and, further, the irresistible impression is that Machir was the only son, strictly speaking (see especially Gen. i. 23). The position of Ashriel in our present passage, first, is also very unsatisfactory in face of Gen. i. 23 and the other references already given.

Ver. 15.—Maachah. Of this Maachah, one among ten of the same name, nothing else is known. The Peshito Syriac makes her the mother instead of wife of Machir. The distinct mention of the marriage of a Manassite to a Benjamite woman is to be noticed. Zelophehad. The meaning of the preceding words, and the name of the second, is unintelligible. Zelophehad was son of Hephen, who was (through Gilead and Machir) great-grandson of Manasseh (Josh. xvii. 3). The number and names and wise appeal and success of the daughters here spoken of, are given in Josh. xvii. 3—6; Numb. xxvi. 33; xxvii. 1—11; xxvi. 5—12.

Ver. 17.—Bedan. While all the names of the preceding verse are strange to us, this name excites a much interest, as possibly to be identified with the Bedan (1 Sam. xii. 11) who is placed after Jerubbaal (*i.e.* Gideon), and before Jephthah and Samuel. Who in the Book of Judges is to answer to this Bedan of the Book of Samuel it is impossible to say. See Bishop Cotton's excellent short article (Smith's “Bible Dictionary,” i. 177). These were the sons of Gilead (see ver. 14). The name Gilead surpassed the name Machir, and even rivalled that of Manasseh itself.

Ver. 18.—Abiezer. He is the nephew, then, of Gilead, and grandson of Machir. Gideon sprang from him (Judg. vi. 11; viii. 32). The name of the mother, Hammoleketh, is compounded of the article and Moleketh, or M'leketh, a Chaldee form, found several times in the Book of Jeremiah, of the word for “queen.” Of Ishod and Mahalah nothing is known, but the latter name is identical with Mahlah, one of the five daughters of Zelophehad.

Ver. 19.—Shemida. Josh. xvii. 2 tells us that the descendants of Shemida obtained their inheritance among the male children of Manasseh; and Numb. xxvi. 32 places him in the Gilead family. Of Ahian, Likhi, Aniam, nothing else is known. Shechem. If this name is rightly placed under Shemida, it must be concluded from Josh. xvii. 2 and Numb. xxvi. 31 that it is a different Shechem from the one there found. This latter was also a Manassite, belonged to the family of Gilead, and was head of a family named Shechemites after him. His descendants are spoken of as the “sons of Shechem” in the above passage of Joshua.

Ver. 20—27.—The chief difficulty of this

passage lies in reconciling the points of chronology which it forces to the surface. Vers. 20, 21, purport to contain the line of descent from Ephraim through his son Shuthelah to the seventh generation, viz. to another Shuthelah. The remaining two names, Ezer and Elead, may perhaps be two brothers of the first Shuthelah, i.e. own sons of Ephraim. If it be so, these two must not be supposed to correspond with Becher and Tahan, called "sons of Ephraim" in Numb. xxvi. 35; for it is evident that they were generations *succeeding* Shuthelah. Now, Ephraim was born in Egypt (Gen. xlvi. 20), so that, on the above showing, the actual sons of Ephraim must have made some incursion from Egypt into the territories of the settled or possibly aboriginal inhabitants of Gath, and met the fate over which Ephraim so mourned. Such excursions on the part of the Israelites out of Egypt have very little collateral evidence. But there would seem to be no impossibility in the matter, considering Gen. 1. 13-23. Next, vers. 23-27 seem to say that in his sorrow Ephraim has another son, whom he names Beriah, and of whose line in the ninth descent comes Joshua, the son of Nun. This also is very doubtful. It may very possibly be that the parenthesis continues to the end of ver. 23 or 24, and that vers. 25-27 carry on the generations from ver. 21. Meantime welcome light breaks in at the stage (ver. 26) at which Ammihud and Elishama are mentioned. For we find these immediate ancestors of the great Joshua repeatedly mentioned at the period of the Exodus (Numb. i. 10; ii. 18; vii. 48, etc.); yet none of these places assist us to say that he did or did not come through Beriah. It is impossible to solve with any certainty the involved question of chronology and genealogy presented by this section. The passage is evidently mutilated and corrupt, though vindicating a high antiquity. A very original presentation of the whole section, as ingenious as it is conjectural, by Lord A. C. Hervey, may be found in the art. "Shuthelah," Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' iii. 1304. It is well worthy of attention that a great point is made in bringing Joshua to the place of the eighth generation from Joseph, in near analogy with the numbers in so many other known cases, of the generations that intervened from the descent into Egypt to the entrance into Canaan. There also may be found the most and best that can be said against the literal reading of what is here written respecting the men of Gath and the cattle.

Ver. 21.—Because they—i.e. the men of Ephraim—came down to take away their cattle. This certainly may be translated, *when they* (i.e. the men of Gath) *came down*

(i.e. into Goshen) *to plunder their cattle* (i.e. the cattle of Ephraim).

Ver. 24.—His daughter. If the literal interpretation of this whole section be accepted, according to which both Ephraim and Beriah must have passed their lifetime in Egypt, the "daughter," strictly so called, of either the one or the other could not have been the founder of the places here mentioned. The word "daughter" must, therefore, represent simply a female descendant. (For other references to Beth-horon, see Josh. x. 10, 11; xvi. 3, 5; xviii. 13, 14; xxi. 20-22.)

Ver. 25.—Of the names Rephah and Re-sheph nothing else is known.

Ver. 27.—Non. The same as Nun (Numb. xiii. 8, 16).

Ver. 28.—Naaran. This place is probably the same with the Naarath or Naarath of Josh. xvi. 7; though here it is said to be an eastward limit, and there its description might rather seem that of a southward limit. Gaza. This name can scarcely designate the well-known Gaza, assigned to Judah (Josh. xv. 47; Judg. i. 18), but so largely the prey of the Philistines (Judg. iii. 3; xvi. 21; 1 Sam. vi. 17).

Ver. 29.—The places mentioned in this verse were assigned to Manasseh. Beth-shean was on the west of Jordan, and was within the borders of Issachar (Josh. xvii. 11-13; 1 Kings iv. 11, 12). Dor was within the borders of Asher (Josh. xi. 1, 2; xii. 23; xvii. 11; Judg. i. 27, 28). Taanach. This place also lay within the borders of Issachar or Asher (Josh. xvii. 11, 12; xxi. 25; Judg. v. 19). Megiddo. This place is constantly coupled with the preceding. It lay on the south of the plain of Esdraelon (Josh. xii. 21; xvii. 12; Judg. i. 27; 1 Kings iv. 12).

Ver. 30.—The same four sons and one daughter of Asher are found in Gen. xlvi. 17; but the name of the second son is wanting to the list of *families* descended from Asher of Numb. xxvi. 44-47, and the name of the daughter is given by itself, and not as furnishing a family.

Ver. 31.—These two grandsons are also found in the above lists of both Genesis and Numbers; but nothing is found there to explain the name Birzavith, which the Keri spells with *yod*, the Kethiv with *vau*. With the former spelling its signification would be the "well of olives," and would point to its being the name of a place rather than of a person, and, as some think, that person a woman (Ge-enius, 'Thes.' 239). (For instances of the expression "father" of a place, see ch. ii. 51, 52; iv. 4, 5.)

Ver. 32.—Japhlet. This son of Heber, not otherwise known, cannot be identified with the "Japhletite" of Josh. xvi. 9

(himself an enigma), on the south boundary of Ephraim, between the nether Beth-horon and Ataroth. Shomer; *i.e.* Shamer of ver. 34.

Ver. 33.—Nothing, except what follows in the next verses, is known of the three sons of Japhlet given in this verse. In them we reach the *fourth* generation from Asher. The generations then travel forward through Helem, presumably a third brother of Japhlet, passing the sons of Shamer, or Shomer, presumably Japhlet's second brother.

Vers. 34, 35.—Ahi. It seems impossible to decide with certainty whether this is the name of a person or whether, with the *vav*, which otherwise begins the next word, it should not be translated "his brother," *i.e.* the brother of Japhlet. In ver. 32 the names of three brothers are given, sons of Heber, *viz.* Japhlet, Shomer, and Hotham. Now, the name Helem, in ver. 35, is supposed to point to this Hotham. If it be so, it would so far be an argument that Ahi, in ver. 34, should be translated "his brother," in correspondence with the undoubted "his brother" of ver. 35. Of no one of the named in these verses is anything further known.

Vers. 36—38.—Vers. 36 and 37 purport to give us eleven sons of Zophah, son of Helem, and grandson of Heber, and these bring us to the *sixth* generation from Asher; and again (ver. 38), we reach the *seventh* in descent from Asher, in the three sons of Jether, or Ithran, the *tenth* son of Zophah.

Ver. 39.—Ulla. Whether in this verse we get to the *eighth* generation depends on who may be meant by *Ulla*. It is impossible to

answer the question. The suggestion has been made that the name may, by some great error of copyists, stand for either Zophah's last son Beera, or, by happier conjecture, Jether's last son, Ara. But neither professes to be anything better than mere conjecture.

Ver. 40.—Twenty and six thousand. The number of Asherites, "of twenty years old and upwards, able to go forth to war," given in Numb. i. 40, 41, was forty-one thousand five hundred. Forty years later (Numb. xxvi. 44—47; comp. ver. 2) the number was fifty-three thousand four hundred. But it is supposed that the twenty-six thousand of this verse may refer only to a portion of the tribe, *i.e.* to the large and distinguished family of Heber. It is to be noticed that the name of the tribe of Asher is not found in the list of the "chief rulers" lower down in this book (ch. xxvii. 16—22). The tone also in which reference is made to Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun coming to Jerusalem to Hezekiah's Passover (2 Chron. xxx. 11) is very noticeable. This tribe, with Simeon, gave no judge to the nation, and of all the tribes west of the Jordan they stand by themselves in this respect. There is an ancient legend that the parents of St. Paul lived within the territories of Asher, at the place called Ahlab in Judg. i. 31, otherwise Giscala, or Gush Chaleb. Against the uncertainty of the legend we may gratefully remember the certainty of the history of the "Anna, . . . daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser" (Luke ii. 36).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 22.—*Mourning and consolation.* There is much obscurity about this passage, as recording an historical incident. But, though it is not easy to decide who the persons referred to were and at what time they lived, the incident is a witness to the community of human nature, both in the bitterness of the earthly lot and in the consolations with which it abounds. We have here brought before us—

I. **BEREAVEMENT.** From the first it has been the fate of men to endure this sorrow, for our days on earth are as a shadow, and death takes away from us all in turn the joys of our hearts, the desire of our eyes, the objects of our hopes. And it is to be observed that the sudden and violent death of our beloved ones is peculiarly distressing. When the young are cut down by wicked hands, in tumult or in war, the shock to survivors is especially painful.

II. **MOURNING.** Lamentation for our dead is natural and right. "Jesus wept" at Lazarus's grave. There is such a thing as sanctified sorrow. In certain cases, even poignant grief and prolonged mourning are excusable. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness." The parent weeps for the children because they are not.

III. **SYMPATHY AND CONSOLATION.** Those who are near akin or intimate friends are expected to offer their affectionate condolence to the bereaved in the hour of sorrow and desolation. This is the obligation of friendship and its privilege also. Helpful and consolatory is true sympathy; for who would wish to bear his heaviest burden alone? Yet the most profitable ministrations in bereavement are those by which the heart of

the bereaved is directed to take refuge in the fatherly wisdom and love of God, and in the tender sympathy of that High Priest who “in all our afflictions . . . is afflicted,” and who is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”—T.

Ver. 24.—A famous woman. We know nothing else of Sherah than is recorded in this verse. Whether she did herself build or enlarge and fortify these towns, or whether this was the work of her descendants, is not easy to decide. The fact, in any case, is of interest for us, that her name should be put upon record in this passage, and should be associated with great works.

I. A WOMAN MAY BE SELECTED BY PROVIDENCE TO FULFIL SOME VAST DESIGN. History records great feats of feminine valour; for women have defended castles and cities by their heroism, and delivered nations, by personal bravery and by the enthusiastic support they have commanded. Some nations, as e.g. our own, number among their sovereigns queens of singular sagacity and statesmanship. In art and in literature, and even in science, women have, in our own times, won for themselves a high position and a wide renown.

II. THE WORK OF NOBLE WOMEN IS ESPECIALLY TO BUILD. If not cities, societies and families have again and again been built up in strength and stateliness and serviceableness through feminine wisdom, sympathy, and devotedness. A gifted and fascinating woman has often been the architect of fortune, and, as the centre and inspiration of intellectual and social life, has not only laid the foundations, but reared the edifice of political and social power.

III. A GIFTED WOMAN'S WORTHIEST WORK IS WORK FOR GOD. How many such shine from the pages of inspiration! Sarah, Miriam, Ruth, Hannah, Esther, in the Old Testament; the Maries, Priscilla, Dorcas, Lydia, in the New Testament, may serve as examples. No work is so congenial to the female character, so truly graceful and ornamental to the feminine life, as work for Christ.

IV. A WOMAN WHO SERVES THE LORD AND LEAVES AN EXAMPLE OF PIETY AND USEFULNESS IS WORTHY OF BEING HELD IN LASTING REMEMBRANCE. If the inspired writer thought well to record the name of the builder of Beth-horon, surely the memory of the noblewomen of our Lord's spiritual kingdom should never fade.—T.

Vers. 1—19.—“The old order changeth.” It is a significant fact that, in this enumeration of names and these references to ancient times, the only complimentary epithets used relate to military affairs. “Their brethren among all the families of Issachar were valiant men of might” (ver. 5); “The sons of Bela . . . mighty men of valour” (ver. 7); “The sons of Becher . . . mighty men of valour” (vers. 8, 9; see ver. 11). We have here an illustration of the fact—

I. THAT MILITARY VALOUR FORMED A LARGE PART OF ANCIENT VIRTUE. The history of the ancient peoples, Egyptians, Assyrians, Greek, Romans, etc., proves this statement with only too monotonous a repetition. The history of the Jews, the ancient people of God, adds one more note of confirmation. We might have supposed it would be otherwise; we might have judged that they would constitute the one exception to the rule. But, so doing, we should have erred. War involves certain most painful incidents, but it is not absolutely and intrinsically wrong. The simple fact that God sanctioned it in many instances, that he commanded his people to engage in it, and that he desired to be inquired of and supplicated in regard to it, distinctly settles that point. 1. It has to be remembered that war does call out the heroic virtues of (1) patient endurance, (2) implicit trust in a faithful leader, (3) courageous daring of utmost danger, and consequent (4) readiness to resign that which is most precious at the call of duty, on behalf of country or in obedience to what seems to be the will of God. 2. It has to be remembered that men have engaged in it without any conscious departure from the obligations they were under to their kind; therefore without any sense of its evil, and therefore without any injury to their conscience and character. The idea that all warfare is positively wrong is a modern sentiment. With quite as clear a conscience armies have gone out to battle as merchants have left home to traffic, or travellers to explore, or even missionaries to evangelize. Other thoughts are in our minds, other feelings in our hearts, because we have learnt—

II. THAT HUMAN LIFE IS NOW TO BE REGARDED AS A VERY SACRED THING. At the

feet of Christ we have learnt that one human soul is a thing of inestimable worth. Hence we have come to prize, as most precious, one human life; and hence we have learnt to shrink from voluntarily taking it away. That which God only can give or renew, from which he requires so much, and on which such great and lasting issues hang,—this is something to be reverently treated. And we have been led to regard with aversion, with deep repugnance, that ruthless system, war, which mows down human bodies without remorse, and which counts amongst its triumphs the number of the slain. We gratefully recognize the fact that, under the beneficent reign of the Prince of peace, we are arriving at the conclusion—

III. THAT THE WORTHIEST TRIUMPHS WE CAN WIN ARE THOSE WE GAIN IN PEACEFUL CONTESTS. 1. In the struggle we maintain against the enemies within us: the *privation* we inflict on ourselves in foregoing things which are evil and injurious, the *perseverance* with which we contend against recurring passions that will not be soon silenced and slain. 2. In the war which we wage against the adversaries of God and man: the *hardship* we suffer (2 Tim. ii. 3), the *risk* we run (danger sometimes ending in death itself, as many a missionary chronicle will tell), the *loyalty* we show to our great Captain, the *faith* we exercise in the overruling mind and the conquering arm of our redeeming God.—C.

Vers. 20-24.—*Divine compensations.* We have, in brief, a story of family life which still has its interest and application to us in our domestic relations. We gather—

I. THAT GRIEVOUS AFFLICION SOMETIMES FALLS ON A HUMAN HOME WITH OVERWHELMING SUDDENNESS. Several sons of one “house” were slain in one day. Which-ever party was the aggressor, and whether the Israelites were guilty or unfortunate, the blow fell with terrible effect on the elders of the family. “Ephraim their father mourned many days” (ver. 22). “Misfortunes never come alone” is only a hasty and false generalization: they generally *do* come alone. It is far truer to say, “One by one our sorrows meet us.” For usually God tempers our griefs by sending them singly and with more or less of interval as also of preparation. More often than not the evil which awaits us “casts its shadow before it,” and we prepare our hearts for the coming trouble. But sometimes it is otherwise. Occasionally, awful, aggravated, multiplied sorrows surge around us, and all the waves and billows of distress go over us without forewarning; from the height of prosperity and joy we go down, in one bitter hour, to the dark depth of loss and woe. No man can tell what tragedy is at hand for himself and his house. The holiest, the most beloved of God, may be standing, at any moment, in immediate peril of an almost unendurable calamity.

II. THAT GOD HAS MERCIFUL COMPENSATIONS IN STORE FOR HIS STRICKEN CHILDREN. He wounds that he may heal; and that, as he heals, he may bless and save. It may be that he will send: 1. *Human sympathy.* Ephraim’s “brethren came to comfort him.” Though the sympathy of human hearts cannot “do” anything for us, as men of coarse minds say, it can and does introduce into our hearts a soothing balm which is very precious to sensitive and responsive souls. It is seldom wasted; it is generally appreciated, and is often most highly esteemed. Or God may provide: 2. *That which replaces the loss.* To the bereaved Ephraim he gave another child, whose name, Beriah, was pathetically suggestive of this sad breach, but whose presence in the home must have gone no small way to repair it. And now it often happens that, instead of the child that is taken, comes the infant who is sent to fill its parents’ hearts as well as its mother’s arms; or instead of the fortune that is lost the competency that is gained. Or God may send: 3. *Some other compensating gift.* From this stricken house he took away some parental love by the death of sons, but he gave a large measure of parental joy by the enterprising spirit of a daughter (ver. 24). It may be well for us that God should exchange one source of happiness for another. Long-continued enjoyment of one satisfaction often begets a false and guilty notion of independence, and even right of possession in the human heart. So God withdraws his gift which is ceasing to be a blessing; but he gives in place of it some other good which will work no evil to the soul. 4. *Spiritual acquisition.* When Ephraim was “mourning many days,” his heart was tender, his mind docile, his soul receptive. Then, we may venture to say, he looked up to God with special earnestness, with filial submission, with peculiar devotion. Great sorrows, sweeping away earthly satisfactions and revealing our own helplessness,

make the aid and arm of man seem but feebleness and cast us back on God. Then we hide in him; then we find that he is the Refuge and the Strength of his people, the true Dwelling-place of the human soul in all generations. In great and deep affliction, as at no other time, we (1) see the meaning and feel the force of sacred truths; (2) come into close fellowship with the Father, the Friend, the Comforter of the human spirit; (3) realize the littleness of earthly life and the preciousness of the heritage which is beyond. Bereft of human wealth, we are "rich towards God."—C.

Ver. 27.—*Joshua and Jesus: resemblance and contrast.* The identity of the names—the one being the Greek form of the other—has led the Church to look on the Hebrew captain as a type of the Saviour of the world. (For confirmation, see Heb. iv. 8.) There are certain resemblances, though the contrasts are as striking if not as numerous.

I. RESEMBLANCES BETWEEN JOSHUA AND JESUS. 1. They both bore the same name. 2. They both brought to the people of God deliverance from the enemies of God. 3. They were both obedient to "him that sent them," and wrought out the work which he gave them to do. 4. They both led (or, lead) the people of God into the promised land. 5. They both began their earthly life in obscurity, and rose (or, have risen) to the highest point of human honour.

II. CONTRASTS BETWEEN THE HUMAN CAPTAIN AND THE DIVINE DELIVERER. 1. Joshua was engaged in the work of his life for (at least) thirty years; the Lord for (at most) three. 2. Joshua fought with carnal weapons, and won victories with sword of steel; Christ fought only with spiritual weapons, and his conquest is the triumph of truth and grace. 3. Joshua had good reason to fear that by his death his life-work would be undone; the Saviour had the best reason to know that by his death his life-work would be sealed and crowned. 4. Joshua led a nation into a land which would prove a temporary inheritance; the redeeming Lord leads the human race "into everlasting habitations," into the *one city* which is *eternal*. Better the humblest post amongst the followers of Jesus than the proudest place in the ranks of Joshua.—C.

Ch. vii., viii.—*Genealogies: Issachar, Naphtali, Ephraim, Asher, Benjamin.* Two conspicuous features are presented in these chapters—genealogy and warfare. Only those are numbered who were found in the registers, and these are all soldiers and "mighty men of valour." They are described in the seventh chapter (vers. 11-40) as "fit to go out for war" and "apt to the war." Thus it is with all God's people. They are of the genealogy. They are "born again," "not of flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." Their names are in the register, too, not in the *earthly* book—the baptismal register only, of which these earthly registers of Israel may be considered as figures—but in the "Lamb's book of life." They know their genealogy, they can trace their pedigree. They are "sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty." Christ is their elder Brother. And they are all "soldiers." They were redeemed for this end, that they should be "good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and "war a good warfare." But how are they to become "valiant," "apt," "fit"? By the discipline of the Holy Spirit, by the afflictions and trials and sufferings of the way, which often make the heart to bleed and the eye to weep. We are told that Solomon had "eighteen thousand stone-squarers" in preparing the stones in Lebanon for the temple on Zion. God has many more than these in preparing his "living stones" in this Lebanon-world for the glorious temple on Mount Zion. We have an instance of this spiritual discipline in this chapter (vii. 21-23). It seems to have been an episode in Egypt before Israel had left it. The patriarch Ephraim was then alive, and at a very advanced age. The men of Gath came suddenly down upon the family of Ephraim (for they, not *Ephraim*, were the aggressors, if we substitute the word "when" in ver. 21 for "because," the *correct* rendering) for the purpose of plundering their flocks. Ephraim's sons were slain. The aged father was deeply afflicted. In accordance with Eastern custom (see Job ii. 11; John xi. 19), distant relatives came to offer their condolences. So deeply did the bereavement weigh upon the aged father that he perpetuated the memory of his sorrow by calling his next son "Beriah, because it went evil with his house." So suddenly do calamities overtake us here! We know not what a day may bring forth. The postman's knock may dash the fairest schemes to pieces and drape our landscape in gloom. Oh, what is there sure *here*? Nothing but

Christ. And, like the mother of Jabez and Ephraim here, our sorrows come, and we, in our unbelief and short-sightedness, *look at* our sorrows and see nothing else. We see not the bow of mercy spanning the cloud—the love that is behind—and so we hang our heads in sorrow, and we write “Jabez” on this and “Beriah” on *that*. Oh that we could trust that love more in darkness as well as in light!—W.

Vers. 2—5.—*The Divine gift of physical strength.* It is remarked as being the peculiar trust and endowment of some men that they were *bodily strong*. They are spoken of as “valiant men of might.” In the line of this endowment came their life-mission, and in the use of this trust they would be finally judged. On St. Paul’s principle that the “body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body,” we are delivered from sentimental undervaluing of our physical frame, and consequent neglect of its culture into health and vigour, or monastic efforts to humble it into a due subjection to the spirit. In view of the relations between bodily strength and religious life, we ought to regard health, vigour, energy of frame, as great gifts from God and, as all Divine gifts are, great and responsible *trusts*. In the older times physical strength found its readiest sphere in armies and wars. So the vigour indicated in these verses took the form of *valour*. The modern sentiments concerning peace and war materially differ from those of earlier ages. The modern admiration of peace and horror of offensive war befit a condition of advanced civilization and the tolerably complete division of the earth’s habitable countries among the different races and nations. Still, we must fully recognize that war has had its important place in the ordering and training of the world. It has often proved to be the best judgment on, and corrective of, serious moral evils; and so there has always been a place and a work for the “mighty man of valour.” On Joubert’s principle, “Force till right is ready,” the physical restraints of social order must come before the intellectual and moral ones; and in such early times and first stages of national development, physical strength, warlike skill, power of command, and valour, are properly recognized as Divine gifts, and they are as truly such as are the gifts of *statesmanship, diplomacy, and arbitration* in quieter, more developed, more civilized times. The laws that regulate the use of all our *bodily* gifts may be effectively illustrated in relation to this one of *valour*. It may be pointed out: 1. *That it may never be used for schemes of personal aggrandizement.* 2. *That it may not be prostrated to any evil uses, of tyranny or passion.* 3. *That it is for use in all ways of loyalty, obedience, brotherhood, and piety.* And there is still the place and the work for the gift of physical strength, though not so much call for it in armies and battle-fields. Great things have been done for humanity by the physical endurance of explorers and travellers, such as Livingstone and Stanley and the members of Arctic expeditions. Great things are done in the saving of life by strong-armed and brave-hearted sailors in our lifeboats, and by firemen in our great cities. Still the demand for manual labour and bodily strength is made, in field and workshop and yard. And though so large a proportion of modern toil is *mental* rather than bodily, and consequently physical vigour is unduly despised, it remains true that the man of mind *imperils his mind* by failure to culture his body into strength. It remains true for the intellectual nineteenth century, as for every other, that bodily strength is a gracious Divine gift, which should be treasured, kept, cultured, exercised, and put to all noble and holy uses. Appeal, especially from the Christian standpoint, that Christ expects faithfulness to the *whole trust* which he commits to us; and holds us responsible for the measure of bodily health and energy we maintain, as well as for the culture of character, mind, and soul which we may gain. “Body, soul, and spirit” together make the living sacrifice, which is our “reasonable service.”—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Woman’s rights in ancient times.* The condition and the disabilities of Eastern women should be explained, described, and duly contrasted with the position won by women in all Christian countries. Especially deal with their secluded lives in their harems, or private apartments; the utter neglect of their education and culture; their disadvantages in never going out into society; and their utterly dependent position, involving the crushing of their personal wills, or the leaving them undeveloped and unexercised. And yet among them some women made for themselves spheres, by force of their character and ability. Give Bible illustrations, such as Sarah, Rebekah,

Moses' mother, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Jezebel, Athaliah, etc. Always women have found spheres among the children and dependents, but sometimes wider and public spheres have opened to them. Women have little recognized legal or public rights in the East. Woman has no standing apart from her husband, and this makes the lot of the Eastern widow so inexpressibly sad. The name Zelophehad recalls a remarkable exception—a case in which women, having no male protector, succeeded in securing and maintaining their own rights; and the story is detailed in the Scripture as affording important instructive features. Compare the modern assertion of woman's legal and governmental rights, and tell how modern legislation has aided in removing women's disabilities. This Zelophehad was a descendant of Manasseh, who died during the wilderness wanderings, leaving no sons, only five daughters, who, by the custom of the time, would be treated as unable to inherit his estates. These five daughters appealed to Moses (Numb. xxvii. 1—7), on the ground that their father had not died under any such judgment as disabled his children, and they asked to be authorized to stand as his heirs. The matter was a new and difficult one, and Moses took it directly to God, and by Divine direction established the new rule that when there were no sons the daughters might claim the rights of heirs. A remarkable illustration of the wise adjustment of law in its practical application to new and unanticipated cases. Bishop Wordsworth says, "It seems to have been God's design in the Levitical dispensation to elevate woman from the degradation into which she had fallen, and to prepare her gradually for that state of dignity and grace to which she is now advanced in the gospel by the incarnation of the Son of God, the Seed of the woman."

I. WOMAN'S PLACE IN FAMILY LIFE. There she properly takes a headship, bearing rule over both children and dependents. Illustrate by the interesting picture of the "virtuous woman and wife" given in the Book of Proverbs. If the woman be but a member of the family and not the head, still there is the due and honourable place of childhood, sisterhood, and friendship. No woman lacks a sphere of kindly useful service save the woman who wants none, because life is for her a mere low self-sphere. Plead for the nobility of womanly duties and relations in the home. Martha and Mary could even prove ministers to the bodily needs of a Friend who was the world's Saviour; many a woman since has "entertained angels unawares."

II. WOMAN'S PLACE IN PUBLIC LIFE. Home, in most cases, provides ample and satisfying spheres. But for women who are free from family ties suitable public spheres are found among *other women*, among the *suffering, the poor, and the children*; and where there is endowment *literature* finds work for woman. These spheres are daily enlarging. They should be fully detailed, and an earnest plea should be made against the *wasting of woman's powers* when such broad spheres claim her abilities and energies, and on them she may enter into the joy of "serving Christ."—R. T.

Vers. 21, 22.—*Common family sorrows.* In these verses is given a very touching episode, and yet it is a very commonplace incident that is narrated. A father gains the news that his sons have been attacked by foes and killed, and, as the poor father sits stricken with the great sorrow, his brethren, his relatives, come to mourn with him and to comfort him. Children are an anxiety and care, all through our relations with them, when "about us" in the frailties of their childhood, and when away from us in the wilfulnesses of their young manhood. Sick-scenes and death-scenes are familiar to most parents, and few human homes last long unbroken. Nor is the comforting of loving friends other than a commonplace and yet most gracious fact of our modern life. Still, the thrill of hand and tear-filled eye and sympathetic word bring relief and rest to burdened and bereaved hearts. Life repeats itself over and over again, and tells its tale of grief and loss concerning one family after another. So it was in the olden times. Ephraim mourns the loss of his children, and his brethren come to comfort him; and thus it is seen that *family life* becomes a moral training for us all; and as the experiences of sickness, sorrow, and loss go round to one after another, we all come under the great Father's sanctifying, and find out how "good it is even to be afflicted."

I. THE LOSS OF CHILDREN. Here especially the greater loss of their death rather than the loss by removal, which never quite quenches hope. Such loss comes at various stages, and we never know at which of their ages the stroke falls lightest. It comes in various ways, slowly or suddenly, and we never can tell which way seemed

to crush us most. The reaper cuts the "bearded grain" and the "flowers;" beautiful infants fly away, bright childhood fades, and blooming youth is smitten; and all we can say about it we say after Jacob, "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." On this we may dwell somewhat more fully.

II. THE PARENTAL GRIEF AT THE LOSS OF CHILDREN. "Ephraim mourned many days." Such grief is well illustrated in David's wailing over Absalom, Elijah's friend's grief over her dead child, and the poor Nain widow going out to bury her only son. The Eastern thought about the children helps to explain the intensity of their grief. Easterns conceived of their own earthly existence as continued in their children—they had a kind of immortality in their children, and they pleased themselves with the idea that their descendants would reach higher dignity and place than they had done. So for their children to die was a plucking down of lofty imaginations, an uprooting of carefully raised hopes. And so it is in measure for us, as may be most tenderly illustrated in the case of the talented young Hallam, whose early death Tennyson deplores in his "In Memoriam."

III. THE FAMILY BONDS SANCTIFIED IN THE LOSS OF CHILDREN. Such points as these may be unfolded and illustrated. It rightly, piously borne, the death of children may be used: 1. To the producing of a *hallowing tenderness of feeling on all the members*. 2. To a *solemnizing estimate of the relative interests of this brief life and the coming eternal one*. 3. To the *self-denying efforts of each member to comfort the others*, often involving most precious lessons in self-restraint. 4. To the *reknitting of the family bonds*. One member of a home realized as being away in the heavenly brings wondrously near and makes affectingly real all that belongs to the "unseen and eternal." And in family griefs we are "comforted, in order that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter carries us back to the tribe of Benjamin, partly dealt with already (ch. vii. 6-12). The tribe is reverted to for the same kind of reason that called for our ch. iii. David was so important a character in the Judah tribe. And Saul, with whom the *resume* of Chronicle-history begins (ch. viii. 33; ix. 39; x.), belongs to the Benjamin tribe. Thus the genealogy of this tribe forms the porch to the history contained in this work, and the forty verses of this chapter rehearse the sons and chief men of Benjamin, with a view to bring into prominence the stock of Saul.

Vers. 1, 2.—These verses give five sons to Benjamin. Of the non-appearance of Becher here (ch. vii. 6) and the appearance of Ashbel in his place, also of the non-appearance here of Jediel (ch. vii. 6) and the appearance of Ahrah (*i.e.* Ahiram, Numb. xxvi. 38) in his place, notice has been taken on ch. vii. 6-12. Of the two additions to the sons of Benjamin here, viz. Nohah and Rapha, nothing is known elsewhere; yet it may be possible to count *five* families from Numb. xxvi. 35, 39.

Vers. 3-5.—Nine sons are here assigned

to Bela. Genesis (xlvi. 41) only finds us clearly three of them, and these in very different order, *viz.* Gera, Naaman, and Arel; and Numbers (xxvi. 39, 40) finds us only three, *viz.* Ard, Naaman, and Shupham. Yet our Huram may correspond with Hu-pham, and then the four pairs of names—Shephupham and Huram, Shupham and Hupham, Shuppim and Huppim, and Mup-pim and Huppim—may be interpreted as designating one and the same couple of persons. The recurrence of the name Gera in ver. 5, so close upon the same name in ver. 3, would of course be more remarkable, and point inevitably to the disordered state of the text, if it were necessary to suppose that these nine persons were really brothers, as well as called sons of Bela.

Vers. 6, 7.—Ehud. We are brought to a halt again by the sudden introduction of this name. Even if it stand for Abihud (ver. 3) or for Ahoah (ver. 4), why is it changed in so short an interval? It is impossible to establish order in these verses except by most gratuitous conjecture. But it may be supposed that the verses say that Ehud's people once belonged to Manahath, that the heads of them removed them to Geba (Josh. xviii. 24), and that he himself (query, Ehud? but commonly read *Gera*) removed them, and also Naaman, and Ahiah, and Gera (which look very much like the

Naanman, Ahoah, and Gera of vers. 4, 5); and finally that after the removing “he” had two fresh sons, Uzza and Ahihud.

Ver. 8.—Shaharaim. It has been proposed, in the utter obscurity here, to add this name as a third to Uzza and Ahihud. This may be a way out, but if so, instead of repeating “and Shaharaim,” it might be more natural to keep the former enigmatic nominative and object to begat, whether Ehud or Gera. There can be little doubt that a copyist’s error has given us them (וְרָא) in place of וְרָא, in the latter part of this verse, before the names of the wives. The sentence then would translate, “after his sending away [whether by divorce or not] Hushim and Baara his wives.”

Vers. 9—11.—These verses give seven unknown sons of Ehud, Gera, or Shaharaim, as the case may be, by the wife Hodesh, whom one would have been glad to identify with Baara, and two unknown sons of the wife Hushim.

Vers. 12—28.—One of the sons of this last-named wife, Hushim, was named *Elpaal*. From ver. 12 to ver. 28 we have a numerous list of his descendants, evidently in different degrees of relationship, but with the thread picked up apparently several times, in the persons of the first-mentioned “sons,” viz. the five, *Eber*, *Misham*, *Shamed*, *Teriah*, *Shema* (see vers. 16, 18, 21, 25, 27).

Ver. 12.—Ono and Lod. These places are not mentioned in Joshua as originally assigned to Benjamin. They were obtained or “built” afterwards. They are first mentioned in this passage, afterwards in Ezra ii. 33; Neh. vi. 2; vii. 37; xi. 36. *Lod* is, with little doubt, the Lydda of Acts ix. 32.

Ver. 13.—Aijalon. A similar kind of history belongs to this place. It was assigned to Dan (Josh. xix. 40—48). Unsubdued by them (Judg. i. 34—36), the Ephraimites possessed it awhile (ch. vi. 47—49), until it came to be more like the common property or care of Benjamin and Judah, situated as it was on their boundary line (1 Sam. xiv. 31; 2 Chron. xi. 10; xxviii. 18).

Ver. 28.—These dwelt in Jerusalem (Josh. xviii. 28; ch. ix. 2—9; Neh. xi. 1—4).

Vers. 29—40.—These verses are occupied with the immediate ancestors and posterity of Saul. And apparently the same account, minus some of its deficiencies, is repeated in the next chapter, vers. 35—44. The two may be taken together here, and the latter will help the interpretation of the former.

Ver. 29.—The father—i.e. the chief—of Gibeon. (For *Gibeon*, see Josh. ix. 3, 7—18; x. 2; xi. 19; Neh. vii. 25; iii. 7.) The father of Gibeon (ch. ix. 35) was *Jehiel* (יהיֵל; Chethiv spells with *vau*; not *בָּנִי*, ch. xv. 24). Of *Jehiel* by this name we do

not elsewhere read. And even if it were on other grounds possible to identify the person with the *Abiel* of 1 Sam. ix. 1 and xiv. 51, it is not possible to identify the names. Compare the similar remarkable omission of the name of the “father of Gibeon” (ch. ii. 49), an omission to be filled very possibly by this same name *Jehiel*.

Vers. 30, 31.—These verses contain the names of eight sons of *Jehiel* instead of the ten of ch. ix. 36, 37. Both of the missing names, however (viz. *Ner* after *Baal*, and *Mikloth* after *Zacher*), are introduced in verses immediately succeeding, where their sons are spoken of. One name, *Zucher*, also is spelt as *Zechariah* in ch. ix. 37. Both these passages agree in representing *Ner* as the grandfather of *Saul*. Not so the two passages in Samuel (ix. 1; xiv. 51), the first of which writes *Abiel* in the place of the grandfather instead of great-grandfather, which, however, need occasion little difficulty; and the second of which would certainly allow *Ner* to be grandfather to *Saul*, but seems to call him uncle. Even then, if we accept what the passage allows, it is somewhat remarkable that in the next verse *Ner* should be signalized as father of *Abner* rather than of *Kish*—a difficulty, however, much less considerable if we accept the suggestion (see ‘Speaker’s Commentary,’ *in loc.*) to translate ver. 51 thus, by the substitution of the word “sons” for “son:” “And *Kish* the father of *Saul*, and *Ner* the father of *Abner*, were sons of *Abiel*.” It must be remembered at the same time that this is not equivalent to saying that they were necessarily brothers, but only descendants of the chief of the family, of the Demarch or Phylarch under mention in the genealogy.

Vers. 33, 34.—The number of *Saul*’s children was certainly nine. In addition to the four (1 Sam. xxxi. 2) mentioned here, there was *Ishui*, probably standing second (1 Sam. xiv. 49), and there were two daughters, *Merah* and *Michal* (1 Sam. xiv. 49), and there were two sons by *Rizpah* (2 Sam. xxii. 8), named *Armoni* and *Mephibosheth*; *Esi-baal*; the same with *Ishboseth* (2 Sam. ii. 8; iii. 7—14; iv. 4—12). *Merib-baal*; the same with *Mephibosheth* (2 Sam. ix. 12). *Micah* is, therefore, the great-grandson of *Saul*.

Ver. 35.—*Tarea*; spelt *Tahrea* in ver. 41 of next chapter. *Ahaz*, the last of the four names contained in this verse, is supplied in italics, Authorized Version, next chapter, ver. 41.

Ver. 36.—*Jehoadaah*. The parallel passage in next chapter (ver. 42) has *Jarah*; but some manuscripts have *Jahdah* (יהודה), which comes very near our *Jehoadaah* (יהודה). *Zimri*. It is possible that this *Zimri* may

rightly be identified with the usurper Zimri of 1 Kings xvi. 9-20.

Ver. 37.—*Rapha*. This name appears as *Rephiaah* in next chapter (ver. 43).

Vers. 38-40.—The genealogy runs on from *Micah* to *Ulam* with nothing special to remark upon. *Ulam* is twelfth from *Saul*, while his “sons and sons’ sons” (ver. 40) are spoken of. The time of *Hezekiah* must

be reached, therefore, who was thirteenth from *David*. The table of next chapter stops with the name *Azel* (ix. 44), and wears the appearance of having just missed the last two verses of this chapter.

Ver. 39.—The name *Ulam* is found also among the descendants of *Gilead*, grandson *Manasseh* (ch. vii. 17).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1-40.—*Readings between the lines*. “Reading between the lines,” or extracting from these tables some moral truths which, if they do not contain, they may fairly suggest, we gather—

I. THAT ALLIANCES OFTEN END IN ENTANGLEMENTS AND ENTAIL UNCONSIDERED CONSEQUENCES. *Shaharaim* went into *Moab* and there married a *Moabitess*, having children of her (ver. 8). The names of his sons (ver. 9) were *Moabitish*—*Mesha* (see 2 Kings iii. 4), *Malcham* (an idol of *Moab*; see 1 Kings xi. 33 and *Jer. xl ix. 1, 2*). This fact points clearly to the evil influence under which his children came through this matrimonial alliance. If we “make affinity” with those who are not of like mind and like principles with ourselves, we must be prepared for serious spiritual consequences.

II. THAT HUMAN ACTIVITY MAY HAVE VERY LONG RESULTS. *Shamed*, the son of *Elpaal*, built two cities; one of them was *Lod* (ver. 12). This is identical with the *Lydda* of our New Testament (Acts ix. 32), and with the modern *Ludd*. Here we have an instance of the results of one man’s activity being witnessed more than thirty centuries after he has been gathered to his fathers. Who can say how far down the stream of time our influence will go? It *may* be visible to the eye of men for generations; it *will* be apparent to the eye of God to the end of time.

“Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And live for ever and for ever.”

III. THAT VIOLENCE IS A BAD FOUNDATION OF REST AND POWER. In ver. 13 we learn that, by a noteworthy coincidence, *Beriah* with *Shema* “drove away the inhabitants of *Gath*.” In the previous chapter (ver. 21) we read that the inhabitants of *Gath* slew the sons of *Ephraim*. Truly “they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” Violence seizes on a neighbour’s land, and by violence is itself dispossessed. That which we gain by mere physical force we must be prepared to part with to the next comer who is stronger than we. The history of the world has, in a large and painful degree, been the record of unlawful seizure and reluctant forfeiture of lands and goods. How much wiser and better to secure by honourable and worthy means that which “no man taketh away” from us, treasure which we shall carry with us whithersoever we go, which time itself cannot steal, and death cannot hold in its grasp!

IV. THAT IT IS WISE TO STAMP BAD THINGS WITH AN EVIL NAME. *Esh-baal* (ver. 33) is the *Ishbosheth* of 2 Sam. xi. 21; while *Merib-baal* (ver. 34) is the *Mephibosheth* of 2 Sam. iv. 4. In these two cases *Baal* is turned into *Bosheth*, which signifies *shame*. Thus, by a simple name, the heathen deity was branded with public reprobation. The evil thing was made to seem the ugly and offensive thing it was. Nothing can be more ¹ *evilous* to the community than the wrapping up of a sin in some pleasant euphemism; e.g. if a daughter has been sinful she should not be called “unfortunate.” Vice does not lose half its evil by losing all its grossness. If we label sin with a name that passes current in society, we are co-workers with the tempter himself. Speak of sin in terms that will bring it into disrepute and reprobation.

V. THAT FAITHFUL REMEMBRANCE IN THE DAY OF POWER IS AN EXCELLENT GRACE. The line of *Jonathan* is traced to many generations (ver. 34, etc.). Is not the hand of *David* here? Is this not a sign that his vow (1 Sam. xx. 15) was honourably fulfilled? What we promise as we are rising we should scrupulously discharge when we have attained the summit of our desires. Many are profuse in promises when the day of performance is distant, but very forgetful of their *vows* when the hour has come to

redeem them. It is the mark of a true man to carry out with generous fulness all that he undertook when he was a long way from the goal and the prize.

VI. THAT THE THOUGHT OF A WORTHY ANCESTRY IS AN HONOURABLE INDUCEMENT TO WELL-DOING. “These dwelt in Jerusalem” (vers. 28, 32). When the captives returned from Babylon there was a lack of men to populate the sacred city. In the country were inviting fields waiting for cultivation, while in the city was danger to be dared and civic duty to be discharged. So that “the people blessed all the men that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem” (Neh. xi. 2). The fact that their ancestors dwelt in the city would probably operate as a powerful inducement to lead many to offer themselves as citizens, and these would thus be led to serve their country in a very serious crisis. The knowledge of the honourable position taken by our ancestry is a very lawful motive to obedience and aspiration. We should, indeed, range ourselves on the right side, and do the noblest deeds because our God, our Saviour, summons us to his side and to the service of our race. But there are many subsidiary motives by which we may be impelled. And among these is the consideration of the part and place our fathers took in their day. We may well be inspired by the thought of their fidelity, their courage, their piety, their usefulness. We do well to cherish the ambition to be worthy of our sires, to maintain and magnify an honourable name, not only to be “the children of our Father who is in heaven,” but the children of our earthly ancestors who dwelt in the city of God and wrought his work in the world.—C.

Ver. 34.—Poor Mephibosheth! The name *Merib-baal*, or *Mephibosheth*, recalls the story of one who was *unfortunate* from his birth to his grave; one on whom the burdens and disabilities of life pressed very heavily. And it reminds us that we find similar cases within the sphere of our personal experiences. There are always among us the lifelong victims of accidents; the bearers for weary years of congenital defects; those heavily weighted with frailty of the vital organs; the victims of incurable disease; the blind, deaf and dumb, idiot, lame, etc. Of all such we may regard Mephibosheth as a type, and with the *class* before our minds so typified, we may learn some lessons of practical importance and permanent application. The outline of the story of Mephibosheth is as follows:—He was the son of David's friend Jonathan, and, at the time of the catastrophe at Gilboa, when his father was slain, he was only five years old. In the excitement and alarm of the defeat, his nurse caught up the child to flee away with him, but she stumbled and fell, and caused thereby the child's incurable lameness. Mephibosheth grew up a weak and helpless cripple. The family estates were secured to him, but his affliction put him sadly in the power of his bailiff and manager, Ziba, who was of a self-seeking and treacherous disposition. By Ziba's schemings and misrepresentations, Mephibosheth fell under the displeasure of David at the time of the Absalom rebellion, and, though explanations were eventually made, the scheming servant was allowed to retain the advantages he had gained. The affliction of Mephibosheth had its influence upon his character. He was of a gentle, retiring disposition, too ready to let others ride over him, but capable of warm affections, faithful to those he loved and from whom he had received kindnesses, and in the difficult circumstances of his life able to manifest great magnanimity of spirit (see 2 Sam. iv. 5; ix.; xvi. 1—4; xix. 24—30; xxi. 7). In the different recorded passages of his life these points find illustration.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF SECURING HEALTH AND VIGOUR IN THE TIME OF CHILDHOOD. The relation of robust childhood to energy, happiness, and success in the years of maturity is becoming every day better understood and more fully realized. The conditions of civilized life put infancy under much disability, and much motherhood is concerned in the mastery of those disabilities, and the strong growing of the young life. Perils come out of hereditary taints, infantile diseases, and, as in Mephibosheth's case, the accidents, or ignorance, or carelessness of nurses. It is not, therefore, a little thing that mothers and all having to do with young children should be skilled in their work and trained into efficiency; and this duty we urge in faithfulness to the great Father, who gives this trust of his young children to the mothers. And no nobler or more responsible earthly work is committed to any one than this watching and culturing of the children.

II. THE INFLUENCE WHICH FRAILTY IN CHILDHOOD MAY HAVE UPON CHARACTER. The relation between our bodily frame and our moral character is fully recognized, though

it is too subtle for us precisely and adequately to trace. Scripture admits it when it says of God, "He knoweth our frame." There is a kind of harmony between the two, so that strength in one is matched by a kind of strength in the other, and frailty in the one is matched by a kind of weakness in the other. This is seen in Timothy. He evidently had a weak and sickly bodily organization, and it was matched by a shrinking, retiring disposition, which St. Paul earnestly urged him to overcome, "enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." The secret of *fretfulness* in after life, of *suspiciousness, despondency, absence of perseverance, and lack of proper self-reliance*, may be found in the frailties of the childhood stages. And oftentimes even the *bodily pamperings and self-indulgences* and failure to *hold the passions under wise restraints*, which are degrading features of the permanent character, find their true genesis in the unnnourished early life. This is a subject of practical bearing on the moral and spiritual well-being of the race, and deserves to be thoroughly thought out, and presented in careful and impressive detail. It becomes a consideration full of solemnity for all who deal with children, that the men and women may as plainly bear on their characters the marks of the neglect or error of mother and nurse, as Mephibosheth bore for his life the consequences of his childish fall.

III. THE DISABILITIES OF FRAILTY AND DEFORMITY IN THE IMPORTANT CRISES OF LIFE. As seen in Mephibosheth's inability to show his real feeling to David when the rebellion tested David's friends. His frailty put him into Ziba's hands. So it is found, again and again, that a man's poor constitution, or his lameness, or his partial deafness, or his deficient eyesight, or his passionate temper, come up against him, and close door after door which otherwise he might hopefully enter. And while this thought should make us very considerate and gentle with any who thus spend life under infirmities, it should also serve to impress the one lesson we are learning from Mephibosheth's life, viz. that too much care cannot be shown in dealing with the young, tender, imperilled life of our children. All this man's troubles were the fruitage of the fall in his childhood.

IV. THE MEASURE OF MASTERY OVER FRAILTY GAINED BY A SINCERE PIETY; or, to put it in Christian form, by a full consecration of heart and life to Christ. This is seen in Mephibosheth, whose piety finds expression in his submission under wrong. It is well illustrated in the life of Calvin, Melancthon, or Baxter, and in such frail men as Henry Martyn. The young man who was thought too weak-bodied to go as a missionary, nobly urged that "he wanted to give his *very weakness* to Christ." The history of Christ's Church most encouragingly records that God has ever found gracious ways in which feeble instruments might do his noblest works.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1.—So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies. The Hebrew verb (*וְהִרְאָה*) is sufficiently satisfied by the rendering *were enrolled, or were registered*. The book of the kings of Israel and Judah. The book referred to is often styled "The book of the kings of Israel" (2 Chron. xx. 34; xxxiii. 18); and it is more probable that that is the intended title here, and that the words should follow thus: And Judah were carried captive to Babylon because of their transgressions. This the Masoretic accenting dictates, though the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Luther have our Authorized Version order. The inconvenience to certain of not being able to find their registers is alluded to in Ezra ii. 59.

Ver. 2.—Now the first inhabitants that dwelt in their possessions, in their cities. Authorities are very divided as to whether

this expression describes inhabitants of the land before the Captivity or subsequent to it. Almost all the older authorities, and Keil amongst those of more modern date, take the former position; Movers, Bertheau, and others take the latter, as also Canon Rawlinson ('Speaker's Commentary,' iii. 157, 211). It must be admitted that there is some obscurity, and which accounts for the contrariety of opinion. But obscurity and contrariety notwithstanding, a comparison of vers. 2 and 3 with Neh. xi. 1—4 produces two impressions almost irresistible, viz. that the difficulty is occasioned by some comparatively slight corruption or mutilation in our ver. 2; and that, whatever the reference is in Neh. xi. 1—4 (and there is no ambiguity there), that it is in the present passage. The fourfold classification intends the Israel people (Isa. xxiv. 2; Hos. iv. 9), the priests, the Levites, the Nethinims, &c. those given as helpers of the priests, bond-

men of the temple (Numb. viii. 18, 19; xxxi. 47; Ezra ii. 40—48; viii. 17, 20). Not before the time of the return does the name Nethinim seem to have crystallized upon this class of helpers, the explanation of which may possibly be that their numbers and their services then became so much more necessary. To this classification is added in Neh. xi. 3, "And the children of Solomon's servants" (Ezra ii. 55).

Ver. 3.—And of the children of Ephraim, and Manasseh. These words are not found in Neh. xi. 4.

Ver. 4.—This verse contains a short list, with many links wanting, of descendants of Judah through Pharez, six in number, and in reverse order. A similar list as regards its extreme terms is that which we find in Neh. xi. 4, but only three (Uthai, Imri, Pharez) of the six names here can be considered identical with a like number (*Athaiah, Amariah, Perez*) out of the seven found there. Neh. xi. 6 adds, "The number of the sons of Perez that dwelt at Jerusalem four hundred three score and eight valiant men."

Ver. 5.—The Shilonites. These are the descendants of Shelah, youngest son of Judah. In place of the one name Asaiah here, Nehemiah (xi. 7) gives a list of seven, among which Maassiah is found, answering to our Asaiah.

Ver. 6.—No corresponding list whatever is found in Nehemiah, but in xi. 24 mention is made of "*Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel, of the children of Zerah.*" Zera was twin brother of Pharez (Gen. xxxviii. 30).

Vers. 7—9.—The corresponding passage (Neh. xi. 7, 8) varies much in the names given, and adds up the number of Benjaminite chief men to nine hundred and twenty-eight, instead of nine hundred and fifty-six.

Ver. 10.—This verse is correct in not calling (as does Neh. xi. 10) Jedaiah the son of Jehoiarib, or as it is there written *Joia'rib*. The origin of the names of these three priest families is found in ch. xxiv. 7, 17.

Vers. 11—13.—This list resembles much more closely that of Neh. xi. 11—14. The one thousand and seven hundred and three score of this passage is not reached by five hundred and sixty-eight, when the numbers of Neh. xi. 12—14 are all added together. The name Azariah (in Nehemiah appearing, probably simply by copyist's error, as *Seraiah*), here described as ruler of the house of God, probably *points* to the high priest *Eliashib*, who held that office in the time of Nehemiah, and was descended from Seraiah (ch. vi. 14). The ins and outs of the lists of these verses confirm the supposition that the way in which differences in the other lists occur are easily to be accounted for, in one compiler having

selected some of the names of the whole line of genealogy, and another others, though in each several case according to reasons often unknown by us. Thus, between Jeroham and Pashur the table of Nehemiah supplies three additional links in the names Pelaliah, Amzi, Zechariah; while in our very next verse, for the three between Maasiah (*Amashai*) and Meshillemith, Nehemiah has only two names, and neither of those two (*Azareel, Ahasai*) the same as found here.

Vers. 14—16.—The corresponding account of these Levites (Neh. xi. 15—18) has some additional details—as, for instance, that the number of "the Levites in the holy city were two hundred four score and four;" that two "of the chief of the Levites, Shabbethai and Jozabad," not given here, "had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God;" that "Mattaniah . . . was the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer;" and that Bakbukiah (here called Bakbakkar) was "the second among his brethren." Ha-shabiah is also stated to be "the son of Bunni." The Netophathites. The town Netophah was either locally near Bethlehem, or in some way closely related to it (ch. ii. 54; Neh. vii. 26). It is not directly mentioned, though existing long before, till the accounts of those who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel (Ezra ii. 22). Interesting facts respecting its people are found in ch. xxvii. 13, 15; Neh. xii. 28. Though our Authorized Version has the name here in the plural, it is not so in the Hebrew, nor is it there accompanied by the article.

Ver. 17.—The porters here are those who had charge of the entrances to the sanctuary. The word employed (*שְׂמָנִים*) is used, however, generally of gate or door keepers (2 Sam. xvii. 26; John x. 3; Mark xiii. 3, 4; John xviii. 16). Their number, stated in ver 22 as two hundred and twelve, is probably corrected in Neh. xi. 19 to one hundred and seventy-two, made up of twenty-four for every week (ch. xxvi. 17, 18), "entering on the sabbath" upon their work (2 Kings xi. 5; 2 Chron. xxiii. 4), in rotation for seven weeks, and the four "chief warders." For the five porters here mentioned there are only two mentioned in Neh. xi. 19, and neither of those Shallum, the chief. But see also Ezra ii. 42; Neh. vii. 45.

Ver. 18.—Hitherto (so John v. 17). The reference must be to Shallum, for see vers. 24—26 and Ezek. xlvi. 1—3. The meaning of the remaining sentence of this verse is, "These were the gate-keepers for the Levite encampments side," or what, in later temple times, answered to it.

Ver. 19.—Shallum. Marked as a different person from the former of the same name, by

the description son of Kore, etc. The pedigree here given enables us to identify the person intended as Shelemiah or Meshhelemiah. (comp. ch. vi. 23, 27; xxvi. 1, 14). Keepers of the gates of the tabernacle . . . of the entry. These are descriptions of "service," not synonymous with those of vers. 17 and 18, where the words שְׁמָרָה and שְׁמָרָה are found, in place of those used here, viz. שְׁמָרִים לְאַלְמָנָה שְׁמָרִים הַפְּכִים. They designate the care of the inner entrances of the sacred building. Their fathers were keepers of the entrance to the tabernacle, as these to the inner doors (margin, "thresholds") of the temple. So the following verse points the times of "the fathers."

Ver. 21.—Zechariah (see ch. xxvi. 1, 2, 11, 14).

Ver. 22.—The seer. It is to be noticed that the compiler of Chronicles uses elsewhere, as here, the "aforetime" name of the prophet, according to 1 Sam. ix. 9. Note in this verse the linking together of the names of David and Samuel, to the ignoring of that of Saul. In their set office. Keil would translate, "Upon their fidelity, i.e. because they had been found faithful." But our margin translates happily, "in their trust," which will include, in part, the thought of Keil, and will suit our ver. 26.

Vers. 23-26.—(See above and ch. xxvi. 12-19.) For the chief porters, Bertheau suggests, as an analogous expression, στρατηγοὶ τοῦ λεποῦ (Luke xxii. 52). The chambers. We have the account of Solomon's building of these in 1 Kings vi. 5-10, 16, 19; it is scarcely likely that the "chamber of mattresses" of 2 Kings xi. 2 was one of these, though the language of the following verse looks that way (comp. also Ezek. xlvi. 5-11). And treasures. These were store-houses (תְּרוּמָה) for gold, silver, as pertaining to the temple, though of corn, etc., in other connections (1 Kings vii. 51; 2 Kings xii. 18; 2 Chron. v. 1; ch. xxvii. 25).

Ver. 28.—That they should bring them in by tale and by tale carry them out. That

is, that they should scrupulously number them.

Vers. 29, 30.—The vessels and other things required for the daily sacrificial service are here spoken of; the verses receive abundant illustration from various Old Testament passages (Exod. xxv. 6: xxx. 23-38; Lev. ii. 1-7, etc.).

Ver. 31.—Mattithiah. The ubiquitous Shallum, that designates the family, not the individual, is probably here quoted, Mattithiah being at the time in question the representative son. The things that were made in the pans. The word here employed (כְּלִים) is not found elsewhere, but other derivatives of the same root are often found (Lev. ii. 5; vi. 21; vii. 9; ch. xxiii. 29; Ezek. iv. 3).

Ver. 32.—The shewbread (מְלֹאכָה); literally, a pile, and hence applied to the cakes, which were piled in two rows (Lev. xxiv. 5-8) "on the pure table before the Lord."

Ver. 33.—Translate, And these singers, chief of the fathers of the Levites, in the chambers were free. The word "free" is surely sufficiently explained by the following sentence, in connection with Ezra vii. 24; Neh. xi. 23. It is more doubtful whether the expression, "these singers," refers to names, which now should have been inserted but are lost, or possibly to ver. 16, *ante*; the idiom would prefer the former. They were employed in that work day and night; literally, *for by day and by night on them, in the work*. If we were to suppose the *cheil* before the "work" an error for *he*, the translation would be easy and free from all doubt, *for by day and by night, the work devolved upon them*. Anyway, the substance of the sense is obvious.

Ver. 34.—This verse can scarcely be other than a closing general comment respecting all the chief fathers of the Levites, who have been spoken of (ch. viii. 28); and it purports to say that the same order and principle obtained in the offices referred to from generation to generation of families.

Ver. 35-44.—(See last chapter, vers. 29-40.)

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 11.—"The ruler of the house of God." Whether this Azariah was the high priest or the "second priest" does not seem certain. But the office here ascribed to him is evidently one of great importance, and is suggestive of memorable truths with regard to God's spiritual temple and kingdom.

I. THE TRUE "HOUSE OF GOD" IS SPIRITUAL. The temple at Jerusalem was the emblem of the spiritual house which no man has built—the Church of the Divine Redeemer and Lord. This is composed of faithful and holy natures, as of "lively stones."

II. THIS "HOUSE OF GOD" IS ORDERED AND GOVERNED ACCORDING TO DIVINE

WISDOM. This is suggested by the word “ruler.” “Order is Heaven’s first law,” and this law is certainly not violated in his most precious and beloved work. God’s own wisdom is displayed in his own temple.

III. **God’s own Son is the RULER IN HIS OWN HOUSE.** No earthly sovereign or ecclesiastical pontiff is the head of the spiritual society in which God’s Spirit ever dwells. Christ is the King, the Lord, the Priest; “the Head over all things to his Church.”

IV. **ALL HUMAN RULERS ARE SUBJECT AND SUBORDINATE TO THE DIVINE LORD.** Bishops are overseers, and presbyters are pastors; but they are not lords over God’s heritage. They have only authority to declare his will, and to execute his commands; and this trust they fulfil, not for their own honour, but for the order and prosperity of God’s house.—T.

Ver. 13.—“*Very able men.*” In this Book of Chronicles praise is accorded, not only to great warriors, but also to scholars and ministers of religion. In this passage priests are described in language which would seem more appropriate to soldiers. They are termed “mighty men of valour,” or valiant heroes, paraphrased in our version as “very able men” for the service of the house of the Lord. The employment of persons so highly qualified to render such service is very suggestive.

I. **GOD CAN MAKE USE OF THE FEWEST AND HUMBLEST INSTRUMENTS IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS PURPOSES.** This should be remarked, lest any persons should consider themselves disqualified from serving God because, in their own judgment, not justly worthy to be termed “very able” or effective labourers.

II. **NO ABILITY IS TOO GOOD, OR EVEN GOOD ENOUGH, FOR GOD’S SERVICE.** If responsible posts, influential professions, call for the services of men highly endowed and thoroughly furnished, shall we say that anything is good enough for the work of God? Remembering the honour of serving him, the difficulties peculiar to his service, let us rather seek to offer to him the best. There is abundant scope for intellectual vigour, mental acquisitions, tender sympathy, unsparing labours, and all other precious gifts, in the service of our redeeming God.

III. **Therefore, THE STRONG AND GIFTED SHOULD BE ESPECIALLY SUMMONED TO ENTER UPON THE WORK OF CHRIST;** to come up “to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” There is room for others; there is room for all; why not for such? If the temple ministrations offered scope for “very able men,” what need is there for wise master-builders, capable pastors, stout-hearted labourers, valiant soldiers, in the work which is dear to the heart of God, and which has been commenced by the grace of the Divine Redeemer! To one and to all we would say, “The Lord has need of you.”—T.

Vers. 26—32.—*Ministers of the sanctuary.* The arrangements for the service of the Levites in the Lord’s house seem to have been made, or at all events settled, by Samuel and by David. The same arrangements, substantially, were adopted by Solomon, in connection with the first temple, and by Ezra and Nehemiah in the second temple erected by Zerubbabel. For the custody of the holy house, four chief warders were appointed, under whom were a hundred and sixty-eight porters, who, in turn, fulfilled their important and sacred office. These attendants had their homes in certain villages in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. A course of twenty-four of them seem to have attended the sanctuary every week, commencing with the sabbath, and the turn of each course would come round once in seven weeks.

I. **OBSERVE THE VARIETY AND UNITY OF THE LEVITICAL SERVICE.** 1. *The variety.* Some were entrusted with the duty of opening and closing the doors. Others had charge of the treasury, where coin, sacred vessels and vestments, etc., were kept in security. Others had the custody of the various vessels and instruments used in sacrificial services. Others made ready the sacrifices, manufactured the incense, or prepared the sacred cakes and shewbread. 2. *The unity.* One God appointed them all, by the same law and ordinance, to their several ministries. One sanctuary occupied their attention and called forth their activity. One nation and people were served by all the ministrations of the priests and Levites. One object was before them all—to serve Jehovah, to obey his Law, to seek his favour.

II. **REMARK THE STRIKING FIGURE WHICH WE HAVE IN THESE MINISTRATIONS OF**

THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING AND DIVINE CHRIST. 1. There are "diversities of gifts" and trusts and services. According to the ability and opportunity is the occupation. 2. Beneath all these diversities there is an admirable unity. It is "the one Spirit" who qualifies and appoints all. There is one body, one temple, one brotherhood. And there is one aim—the service and glory of the one God and Saviour.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Let each Christian fulfil his own vocation. 2. And, at the same time, regard with sympathy and affection his fellow-workers in the same service. 3. And ever look to the one end—the service of his redeeming God.—T.

Ver. 1.—“*The far country.*” The text speaks of those who were “carried away to Babylon for their transgression.” In every age and land *sin means exile*. It is a fruitful source of division, of painful and hurtful separation. Sin, which is “the transgression of the Law,” makes us go out into “a far country.” It takes us—

I. **TO A STATE OF SEPARATION FROM GOD** (Isa. lix. 2): from his conscious presence, his favour, his likeness, his dwelling-place.

II. **FAR FROM A TRUE, AN IDEAL MANHOOD.** We sink a long way below the level of a pure, holy, estimable humanity.

III. **INTO THE DREARY REGION OF RESTLESSNESS, MISERY, DESPAIR.**

IV. **TO “THE FAR COUNTRY” OF INDIFFERENCE, HEARTLESSNESS (“past feeling,” Eph. iv. 19), UTTER UNBELIEF.**

V. **TO “THE OUTER DARKNESS” OF FINAL EXILE FROM THE CITY OF GOD.**—O.

Vers. 11-13.—Authority and ability in the service of God. Azariah was “the ruler of the house of God” (ver. 11); concerning a thousand seven hundred and sixty it is said that were “very able men for the work of the service of the house of God” (ver. 13). Here we have high authority and eminent ability in the service of the Lord.

I. **AUTHORITY IN SACRED SERVICE.** Our Saviour did not establish a hierarchy in the Christian Church. The apostolate was obviously a temporary institution. We read of “elders that rule well” (1 Tim. v. 17), and the Hebrew Christians were charged to “obey them that had the rule over them” (Heb. xiii. 17). There was, as there is now, a place in the Church for authority on the one hand and for loyalty on the other. There are, as there ever will be, those who direct, control, organize, appoint, remove. On the part of such there should be: 1. A sense of deep responsibility; for on their decision and direction great things depend. 2. A constant appeal for Divine guidance. In the affairs of his kingdom surely the Divine Sovereign should be continually consulted by those who speak in his Name. 3. Great carefulness to act in harmony with his revealed will, so that they may not, while professing to work for God, be simply imposing their own fallible judgment on other minds. 4. The cultivation of humility, lest they should aspire to “have dominion over the faith” of men, instead of walking humbly with God, and serving in love like that Son of man who “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”

II. **ABILITY IN SACRED SERVICE.** (Ver. 13.) The ability which these priests displayed in the service of the sanctuary was of a somewhat different order from that which is now required in the service of man in the Church of Christ. But it was inspired by the same Divine Being, and it aimed at the same end—the spiritual well-being of the nation. We remark concerning ability in sacred service: 1. That it is, in large part, the gift of God. “Very able men” are “what they are by the grace of God.” Their conspicuous ability is his endowment. From the Author of their being come the faculties (memory, imagination, judgment, reason, enthusiasm, strength, will, etc.) which distinguish them from their fellows. They owe their eminence to the supreme hand that raises and levels all things. Therefore (1) let those who possess remarkable ability wear their honours meekly, remembering whence they came; and therefore (2) let not those who lack it be envious of those who enjoy it, for then their “eye would be evil” because God is good. 2. That it is, in large part, the product of human effort. The greatest “abilities” will come to no ripeness and bear no fruit without human industry, patience, effort. Many who have it *in them* to do great things go to the grave having lived useless, wasted lives. Therefore (1) let those who are gifted of God see to it that they train, mature, and use the capacities they have of him; and (2) let those who

receive the benefit of such ability honour the human while they bless the Divine Author of it. 3. That it is a gift for the use of which its possessors should feel a large measure of responsibility. Who shall measure the vastness of the influence for good or evil which one man of great ability may exert, if we take into account not only the direct but all the indirect results of his action? 4. That the approval and award of the Master depend, not on ability, but on faithfulness. They who have served God with special powers will have the gratification of seeing peculiarly large results; but whether our talents be few or many, if we be faithful at our post, we shall all share the "Well done" of the righteous Judge.—C.

Vers. 14-34.—Aspects of Christian work. In the service of the sanctuary there were many offices to be filled, various duties to be discharged. These will bring to our remembrance three aspects of our Christian service.

I. THAT LOWLY LABOUR IN THE SERVICE OF THE SAVIOUR IS HONOURABLE WORK. The work of the Nethinims (ver. 2) was not to be despised; they did work which was comparatively menial, but it was work that needed to be done for God, and was accepted by him. Of the Levites, some "had the charge of the ministering vessels" (ver. 28); others of "the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices" (vers. 29, 30); one of them was placed "over the things that were made in the pans" (ver. 31). These offices were humble enough, but they were not counted dishonourable by those who rendered them, and they were esteemed worthy of record in the sacred chronicle. In the cause of Christ and of man there are many duties that are demanded of us, which, to the eye of impiety, may seem servile and mean. If, however, we are looking at things with the eye of faith and filial love, they will not wear this aspect. Loyalty counts nothing too mean to be rendered to its sovereign; love nothing too trivial to be offered to its friend. Our loyalty to the heavenly King, our love to our Divine Friend, should make us not only willing but eager to take any part and do any work in his sacred service.

II. THAT A POST OF TRUST IS ONE OF SPECIAL HONOUR. It is very noticeable that so much is said about the porters that kept the gates: "the work of the service" is markedly referred to as "keeping the gates of the tabernacle;" these "over the host of the Lord," were "keepers of the entry" (ver. 19; see vers. 21-24). We read also that "four chief porters . . . were over the chambers and treasuries" (ver. 26). Special provision was made for their entertainment (ver. 27). These actions were simple, mechanical—it might be thought lowly, if not menial. But they were places of trust. It was important that none should be admitted to the holy places but those who had the right of entrance. These men had the purity of the sacred courts at their command; they were trusted to see that these were not profaned by unhallowed feet. When we are trusted by our fellows or by our Master to do anything, whether it be in itself serious or slight, we should feel that we are being honoured, and we should put forth all our vigilance, strength, vigour, to prove ourselves worthy of the confidence placed in us. Nothing should make so strong an appeal to our undivided energies as being trusted to see that something is done well in the service of our Saviour.

III. THAT CONSTANCY IS A VERY VALUABLE VIRTUE IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE. The singers "were employed in that work day and night" (ver. 33). It was pleasing to the ear of Jehovah to hear ceaseless strains of holy song in the house of the Lord. It is pleasing to the heart of the ascended Saviour to witness spiritual constancy in those that bear his name and profess to be his disciples. He has ordained us that "our fruit should remain" (John xv. 16). He wishes that we should "continue in his love" (John xv. 9). We are to continue in the *doctrine* of Christ (Acts xiv. 22; 1 Tim. iv. 16; Col. i. 23), and in *brotherly love* (Heb. xiii. 1). The secret of constancy in the various graces of Christian character is abiding in Christ himself (John xv. 1-7). Abiding in him—our spirit trusting, resting, rejoicing, hoping in him—our life will not flicker or expire; it will shine, like the lamp in the holy place, like the song in the sanctuary, "day and night," steadily, serenely, abidingly, in the presence of God.—C.

Ver. 20.—"God with us." "The Lord was with him." These words frequently occur in the sacred Scriptures. Of many of the worthies of ancient time is God's favouring presence stated—of Abraham (Gen. xxvi. 24), of Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 15), of Joseph

(Gen. xxxix. 2), of Samuel (1 Sam. iii. 19), of David (1 Sam. xviii. 14), etc. There is evidently something more in the words than—

I. THE OBVIOUS SENSE IN WHICH GOD IS CONSTANTLY PRESENT WITH EVERY ONE. The omnipresent One cannot be separated, in space, from any of his creatures. "He is not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts xvii. 27, 28).

"Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,
We are surrounded still with God."

(See Ps. cxxxix.) We shall fail to find in the text its chief significance if we do not see—

II. THE DEEPER SENSE IN WHICH GOD IS WILLING TO BE NEAR US ALL. He is ready to be with us: 1. With his *favouring* presence; as a loving friend is, in sweet fellowship with his friend. 2. With his *sympathizing* presence; as the patient mother is with her sick or suffering child, taking his hand to assure him of her closeness to him and tender care for him. 3. With his *encouraging* presence; as a teacher is with his pupil, animating him to do his best in the trial-hour. 4. With his *guiding* and *guardian* presence; as the father leads his child on in the darkness, at once showing the way and defending from the unknown perils in the path. If we yield ourselves to God in the time of our youth, and determine to walk with Christ along the path of life, then his gracious presence will attend us at every step, he will be *with us* to our journey's end, and will finally take us to be *with him* in the eternal home.—C.

Vers. 1-44.—Genealogy of the returned exiles. This chapter records the genealogies of Israel when, as exiles, they had returned from Babylon. Almost all the names recur in Nehemiah (xi). God's people may be scattered and downtrodden and degraded in strange lands, but he has his eye on each, and their names are in the book of life. Not one shall be missing when the Lord shall gather his own again in that land where they shall return to go no more out. The servants of God had each their work apportioned. Some had the charge of pans; some had to number the vessels; some to carry them in and out. Some were porters at the door of the house of God; some porters at the king's gate; some "keepers of the entry;" some to oversee the vessels; some makers of "the ointment of the spices;" and some had the more exalted office of rulers of the house of God. Thus the occupation of each was widely different, but each one had his place in the vineyard, some exalted, some humble. Oh to be able to say, in whatever position of life God may place us, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Let each one fill his post, however humble it may be, and "do it heartily as unto the Lord." The reward will be given, not according to the *dignity* of the post, but according to the *faithfulness* of the servant. "Be thou *faithful* unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." There is one service in this list which is worthy of note. It is that of the Levites who were singers. They were free because they were in the chambers of the house of God, and their work was to praise day and night (ver. 33). Surely praise is for all times, and is associated with freedom in the highest sense of the word. The soul that has been "made free" can sing; and praise, unlike prayer, will never end. "I will bless the Lord *at all times*: his praise shall *continually* be in my mouth." None can praise but those whom "the truth" has made "free," and they can sing, like Paul and Silas, even in a dungeon. These are the true Levites. They are indeed in "the chambers"—the secret places of God's love. The service of praise is indeed "upon them" (margin). They *must* praise. *They cannot do otherwise.* They know Jesus. They see him. And they look forward to that time when they shall praise him "as they ought." God hasten that glorious time, when heaven and earth shall be vocal with praise, and Jesus shall be the Object of it for ever!—W.

Ver. 2.—Returned captives. The allusion made here to those who were the *first* to reoccupy their ancestral possessions in the Holy Land, may serve to introduce the subject of the returned captives, and may set us upon learning the permanent lessons of their restoration. Some account may be given of the moral and religious condition of the Jewish people while in Babylon; of the literary, national, and religious influences exerted upon them by the associations of their captivity; of their measure of fitness

for restoration when the providential time came ; and of the historical circumstances which led up to their release. For these topics valuable help may be gained from Stanley's 'Jewish Church,' vol. iii. We only note one or two points which might be missed or under-estimated. 1. The work of the prophets of the Captivity, in distinctly connecting national sufferings with national sins, and so producing a national repentance and a heart-return to Jehovah. 2. The influence exerted by the association of Babylonian idolatry with Babylonian tyranny ; a similar influence to that exerted by the Egyptian experiences on the first fathers of their race. They were made to feel that idolatry could never assure national liberty ; it is never anything but an engine of human tyranny—man's way of mastering and managing the bodies and minds of his fellow-men. The Jews have been, ever since the Captivity, the most strictly *monotheistic* race on the face of the earth. 3. The sympathy with the Jewish people which Cyrus, as a monotheist, was likely to feel. 4. And the limited and almost disappointing character of the first party to return. It was but a company *representative* of a national return. The majority of the Jews, having become settled and prosperous in the land of their exile, preferred to remain behind ; only 42,360, attended by 7337 servants, were found willing to return to their native land. That company started under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the head of the house of Judah, and grandson of King Jehoiachin. The chief effects of the Captivity upon the Jews have been thus summarized : (1) The old tendency to idolatry had been eradicated ; (2) there had sprung up a deep reverence for the letter of the Law, and for their great lawgiver, Moses ; (3) the love of agriculture had declined, and had given place to a taste for commerce and trade ; (4) the vernacular language had undergone a change, the old Hebrew giving place to the Chaldee. Fixing our attention on the first returning company, we note—

I. **THEY HAD RETURNED TO LOYALTY.** That is, to their full allegiance to Jehovah, their one, immediate, invisible, spiritual King. This heart-return and national return was the essential preparation for their restoration ; as we know that repentance, confession, conversion, and heart-return to God must ever precede the assurance of Divine forgiveness and acceptance. The sanctified influences of the Captivity bore directly upon bowing the people down in penitence and winning them to full allegiance to their God. So it may be impressively urged that Divine blessings are always held back until we are *ready* to receive them, and the great readiness is full openness to God, hearty loyalty to him.

II. **THEY NOW RETURNED TO PRIVILEGE.** Explain their sentiment about their beloved land, as showing what a privilege they esteemed it to be only to go and *dwell* in it. They also had the privilege of comparative national *liberty* and *independence*. They might enjoy their *family possessions*. They might renew the *Jehovah-worship*. God would do great things for his loyal people whereof they might be glad.

III. **THEY FOUND THAT RETURN TO PRIVILEGE MEANT RETURN TO DUTY.** A connection that is universally preserved and constantly repeated. Privilege never stands alone. No man can ever get it as an isolated and distinct thing. *Responsibility* and *duty* are always linked with it ; and whoever will have privilege must have these things with it. The "returned captives" found that they were called to rebuild their city, till their lands, restore their ceremonial worship, reorganize their governmental and social systems, secure their defence from external foes, raise again their demolished walls, and erect a new temple upon the ruins of the old. And, beyond such material things, they were bound to "occupy for God," they were to present such a model "state" as would effectively witness to all surrounding nations, and to all succeeding generations, of God's high claims, God's infinite justice, God's triumphing mercy, and God's sure faithfulness alike to his threatenings and to his promises. The forms in which, for us, duty follows privilege may be illustrated. Position brings influence, wealth brings power, learning brings claims, gifts bring spheres, piety brings the call to witness, etc.

Application may be made to God's restorations from the sicknesses and calamities of life. When God brings us up again out of any "depths," we should feel as did David, "Before I was afflicted I went astray : but now have I kept thy Word." If we thought aright we should daily regard ourselves as urged to all holy endeavour by the pressure of the feeling that we are God's "restored ones."—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*Strong for God's service.* Of certain men, otherwise unknown, this is the permanent historical record, “They were very able men for the work of the service of the house of God.” It is a description full of interest, and reminds us that—

I. GOD GIVES TO MEN THE NEEDED GIFTS FOR HIS WORK. For all his work in the world; but here we are specially reminded of his work in the Church and in Divine service. In older times we find Moses with the genius for order and rule, and Bezaleel with the genius for decoration, and Joshua with the genius for war, and David with the genius for song; and so on through each age we may go, marking the men endowed with gifts for pious services. Each apostle has his gift. Reformers, leaders, teachers, rise for their specific work in each age—Augustine, Anselm, Bernard, Luther, Calvin, Pascal, Whitefield, etc. Ever and again God gives us “very able men for the work of the service of his house.” And the greater and more prominent instances only affirm and assure the general truth that for all his work, be it greater or smaller in man's esteem, God ever finds the men and endows with the gifts, and each may become, by the faithful culture of his gift, a “very able man” for God's service. If he may he ought.

II. THE GIFT IS OFTEN UNRECOGNIZED BY HIM WHO HAS IT. And so the Church loses much of the service she needs. Especially apply to the ministerial endowment. It is usually found associated with a modest and retiring disposition, and in self-diffidence many fail to believe in their own powers. And powers often lie dormant and unrecognized until circumstances of life secure their development. Men are often surprised by the discovery of hitherto unknown faculties. The men who push are seldom the men of real power. But the modesty of the highly endowed often prevents their gaining their due place and sphere. As an instance of unrecognized gifts, reference may be made to Dr. Guthrie, who, though so successful as a writer, only began to write for the press when he had reached middle life. We need a worthier apprehension of the truth that every renewed man is also an endowed man. In the light of it we may urge on each individual the duty of discovering his gift, and so cultivating and using it that he may prove a “very able man” for the work of the Lord. Exactly what Christ's Church needs is “very able men,” by endowment and culture, in all her departments of service; and we should have the faith that the *endowments* are given us, and we must secure the *recognition* and *culture* of them.

III. THE CHURCH SHOULD DISCERN THE MEN WITH THE GIFTS. Compare the intense expression of Moses, “Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets!” Sometimes *jealousies of order and office* blind our eyes so that we cannot see the gifts of others. Sometimes *desire for the exclusive honour of place and work* makes us wilfully put other men down. Sometimes the presentation of the gift in *forms which appear to us strange*, leads to our making a false and unworthy estimate of the gift. The Church has often grievously erred in casting out from her midst “very able men for God's service.” They who watch for Divine endowments must be willing to recognize them in the great variety of forms in which they come to men. And all we really need to be assured of is the *Divine stamp* upon them. To refuse the men whom God has gifted is to be “found fighting against God.”

Press the responsibility of all who are in Church offices which bring them into immediate contact with the people or the children. They should be ever looking for the “signs of power,” and leading out those who may become “very able men for God's work.” And then press the responsibility that rests on the men who are found and proved *strong, able* for God's work. Having “put their hand to the plough, they must not draw back.” Life for them is full of noblest possibilities. They must be “faithful unto death,” and win “the crown of life.”—R. T.

Ver. 19, etc.—*God's door-keepers.* Some were appointed to serve as “keepers of the gates,” and some as “keepers of the entry,” and one man was “porter of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” David recognized an attractiveness in such offices because they secured constant presence in the holy courts. He says, “I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

I. LOWLY SERVICES ARE ASKED AT OUR HANDS. Common life in the family, the business, and society has its many lowly services and its few great ones. And in

religious life the same is true. Of most of us God asks that we will do *little things* for him well. What a gracious lesson in doing cheerfully lowly work our Lord gave us when he laid aside his garments, took a towel, girded himself, and began to wash the disciples' feet! "He that would be greatest among you let him be your servant."

II. **LOWLY SERVICES ARE NECESSARY TO THE GENERAL WELL-BEING.** Illustrate from church offices. The organ-blower's is a very humble office, but most necessary and useful. The verger, door-keeper, cleaner, etc., are but in humble places and duties, and yet the comfort of "priest and people" depend on their lowly work. So in all good enterprises there is a great deal of mechanical and insignificant work demanded, but the efficient doing of them bears directly on the entire success. Standing quite alone, the humble duty seems scarce worth the doing, but when it is seen fitting into its place in the great whole, its real importance and dignity are recognized. Illustrations may be found in the importance of the lesser parts of a great machine or work of mechanical construction. A fine tower once fell in ruins to the surprise of all, until the builder confessed that he had neglected the little iron ties—insignificant things—that held the stones together. No man ever gains a worthy apprehension of life until he fully and finally settles with himself that he will think nothing *small*, and treat nothing as *small*, since "all things have their necessary uses," and God asks for "faithfulness in that which is *least*."

III. **LOWLY SERVICES FIND SPHERES FOR THE EXPRESSION OF CHARACTER.** And the best; for men are less sophisticated, more simple and more genuine in them. If we would know what a man really is, we must not watch him merely on "show days," but rather see him in the private scenes of home and business. We put on character-garments for public scenes, just as we do outer coats for the streets. When "taken at unawares" we express what our character really is.

IV. **LOWLY SERVICES OFTEN BECOME THE MOST EFFICIENT TESTS OF CHARACTER.** The necessity for personal attentions to the poor wounded man on the road to Jericho, tested and proved the selfishness of priest and Levite, as a call for some high and honourable service would not have done. And similar calls are made on us. We want to do the great things, and show off the blossoms of fine character which we have carefully *stuck on*. And God, in his providences, only provides humble spheres, unobserved places, and lowly work, which will let the fine pretences alone to wither and fall off, and only test and culture the real and the worthy and the true. Who of us can review our lives, and fail to see the places where, again and again, we were "weighed in the balances and found wanting" when we were asked to take some humble place of service or do some little thing for Jesus' sake? Still we are so unwilling to take the lowest rooms, even though Christ taught us that he looks among the people *there* to find the right-hearted, the worthy, whom he may bid "Go up higher." In respect of the power to hold and exhibit *character*, the *little* things often have more capacity than the *big*.

V. **LOWLY SERVICES FIT IN WITH GREATER ONES TO PERFECT THE WHOLE OF SERVICE.** Door-keepers fit in with porters, and sacrificers, and singers, and priests, to make the *whole* of temple service. And the *least* piece lost from the whole mars the beauty of the perfect service. What God asks is *faithfulness*, and he can find it in the "*least* things." Remember George Herbert's familiar verse, "Who sweeps a room," etc.

—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*Samuel's life-work.* The assertion made in this verse, that Samuel was concerned in the organization of the tabernacle service, comes upon us with surprise. We are to suppose that he provided for the reformation of the ritual and ministrations in the tabernacle after the confusions in the days of the judges; though this statement is not found in any other place in the Old Testament. "Samuel the seer was zealous for the external ordinances of God's house, and the precursor of David in this respect." We have *side hints* given us in the Scriptures of work done by great and good men which is not detailed so as to become a part of history. We need not assume that the whole of any man's story is preserved; only such parts as are likely to prove permanently interesting and instructive. An instance may be found in the case of David. His public life of incident pushes back out of sight his valuable labours in connection with the sanctuary order and worship. So the worthy estimating of any

human life is a difficult, nearly an impossible thing, seeing that we have not the whole before us, nor can we fairly judge the relative value of the parts. Full estimates of human lives must be left to God and the future. It is full of instructive significance that, as the generations pass, wholly different estimates are taken of historic characters, as other and fuller information concerning them comes to light. This may be illustrated in the cases of Lord Bacon, whose moral character recent writers are able to clear, and Protector Cromwell, whose portraiture Carlyle has at last succeeded in worthily drawing. Apply these thoughts to Samuel, and estimate—

I. **HIS KNOWN WORK AS A JUDGE.** He belongs to the class so called, and was a *deliverer* and a *magistrate*, combining the offices which were characteristic of this order of men. In his *deliverings* grandly loyal to Jehovah. In his *magistracy* pure-handed and abidingly faithful to men. Everywhere and in everything making *character, piety, and integrity* tell for good.

II. **HIS UNKNOWN WORK AS A RELIGIOUS REFORMER.** Explain the influences upon a national religion of such changes and troubles as marked the time of the judges. Such conditions do not imperil personal piety, they rather intensify it, as may be seen in the story of the persecuted Christians in Madagascar; but they do imperil the order and ceremonial of religion, and especially in such a case as that of Israel, in which the religion was centralized on one spot, and to it all the worshippers had to come at fixed intervals. Samuel would not only have to restore the tabernacle *system and services*, but also to revive the religious spirit of the people; and to this, doubtless, his earnest attention was directed in his regular circuits for the administration of justice.

III. **HIS ASSUMED WORK AS THE FOUNDER OF THE SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS.** For on this part of his work we have no certain information. "In his time we first hear of what in modern phraseology are called the 'schools of the prophets.' Their immediate mission consisted in uttering religious hymns or songs, accompanied by musical instruments—psaltery, tabret, pipe and harp, and cymbals. In them the characteristic element was that the silent seer of visions found an articulate voice, gushing forth in a rhythmical flow, which at once riveted the attention of the hearer. These or such as these were the gifts which under Samuel were now organized, if one may so say, into a system. From them went forth an influence which awed and inspired even the wild and reckless soldiers of that lawless age. Amongst them we find the first authors distinctly named, in Hebrew literature, of actual books which descended to later generations. Thither, in that age of change and dissolution, Samuel gathered round him all that was generous and devout in the people of God."

Learn to estimate aright men's *secondary* influence and work, for in this God may judge otherwise than we are wont to do, and put our *last first*.—R. T.

Vers. 23—34.—*The importance of order in God's worship.* The point of interest in these verses is the extreme care given to securing quietness, regularity, order, and due solemnity in God's worship. A point emphasized by the apostle in his counsel to the early Christian Church, "Let all things be done decently and in order." The order of God's house has this for its special mission, that it *declares, realizes, and illustrates* the Divine order in creation, providence, and redemption. "Order is Heaven's first law;" and it is the necessary attendant on truth, purity, almighty, and the eternally right. So if man, in any of his spheres, can present a worthy picture or shadow of the Divine, one of its essential features must be *orderliness*, and such orderliness will prove to be *witness and power*.

I. **ORDER REGARDED AS A SIGN OF OBEDIENCE.** Since it is God's will that everything should have its fitting place and be in that place, our setting things right becomes a sign of our true-hearted obedience to him; and the securing of order gains moral quality, and becomes an agency in the culture of character.

II. **ORDER REGARDED AS A SIGN OF SYMPATHY OF FEELING WITH GOD.** Not merely have we to concern ourselves with it as our duty, but, from a higher standpoint of kinship with God and fellowship with his mind, we want what he wants, we love what he loves, and we try to get our works in full harmony with his. We would have heaven and earth ring together the same sweet note.

III. **ORDER REGARDED AS OUR WITNESS AGAINST THE DISORDER OF SIN.** If we have rightly caught the redemptive spirit, then we shall be oppressed and troubled by

the disorders caused by sin, whatever forms they may take, and we shall ever be striving to reach them that we may set them straight. Therefore Christians enter as remedial and recovering forces into all family life, social life, business life, and national life; everywhere seeking to get things out of the disorders of evil, and set in the eternal order of righteousness. And in Christ's *Church* and Christ's *worship* the devoutness, regularity, and beauty of a gracious order should make a striking contrast with the restless, anxious, disordered world around. Men should find heart-rest in God's sanctuary.

IV. ORDER REGARDED AS A MORAL FORCE IN THE WORLD. For what does it plead and work? For (1) *stillness*; (2) *forethought*; (3) *grace of form*; (4) *due relations of office*. But under ordinary human conditions even "order" has its perils. It may come to be sought for its own sake and not merely for its uses. It may come to supersede "life" and even to crush "life" out, as has been proved in the over-elaboration of Church ceremonial. Two things are essential to true and worthy human worship. They are fully compatible one with the other. The culture of each may run along with the culture of the other. Nothing can supersede "life"; but order may be fully developed so that it may worthily express "life."—R. T.

Vers. 28—32.—*Every man to his own office.* The distribution of *gifts* is constantly recognized, and on this we have much apostolic teaching. But the answering distribution of *offices* requires to be more fully apprehended. The *power* and the *place* are divinely fitted together; and in the economy of the Divine administration we may be sure there are no more powers given than there are places in which the powers may find exercise. It follows upon this that each man is bound to *realize his power, discover his place, fit into it faithfully, and interfere with no other man's work*. The way in which one man's gifts and work may fit into another man's is often an insoluble puzzle to us, but is quite plain in the plan of Divine forethought, and will be discovered when we can read final issues. Each man stands right before God when he clearly sees *his* work and says, "This one thing I do." The following points have been, in part, presented in previous outlines; they should be dealt with now in the light of the above topic, "Every man to his own office:—"

I. GOD HAS BOTH GIFTS AND SPHERES FOR THEIR EXERCISE. That he has gifts we know, but we too readily assume that the spheres are human arrangements.

II. GOD'S PROVIDENCES TEND TOWARDS SECURING THE PROPER RELATION OF GIFTS AND SPHERES. A north-country proverb tersely expresses this, "The tools will come to the hands that can use them." Every man, sooner or later, gains his providential opportunity, when he *may* do what he *can* do.

III. MAN'S WILFULNESS SERIOUSLY MINGLES THE GIFTS AND THE SPHERES. By some men's failing to recognize their gifts; by others prostrating their Divine gifts to base and selfish uses; by some, when they know their gifts, refusing to occupy their spheres; and by the forcing of too many into certain particular spheres for which an undue preference is shown. What we need in Christ's Church and work is a wise subdivision of labour and more earnest endeavour to do faithfully and well *our little piece*. And in just this our Lord and Master set us his own holy example.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER X.

It is evident that the compiler of the *Chronicles* intended its history proper to begin substantially with the reign of David. Strictly, however, it opens with the last mournful chapter of the career of Saul and his sons, or of three out of the four (ch. ix. 39) of them. The mention of Saul had been prepared for by the short preamble of

his pedigree and family; and, in like manner, the way is paved for the introduction of the reign and deeds of David by the brief and affecting narration of the end of his predecessor on the throne. The last chapter of the *First Book of Samuel* occupies itself with the same subject and covers the same ground. Our present chapter compared with that is sufficient to convince us that both were drawn from some common source

or sources. It is not possible to suppose that the writer of Chronicles merely copied from the Book of Samuel. The differences are very slight, but they are such as produce a different conviction, and are not consistent with the assumption of being mere alterations and additions upon what is read in the other work. The last two verses of this chapter form the distinctive feature of it, compared with the parallel of 1 Sam. xxxi. The appropriateness of these two verses, as bridging over the history from Saul to David, is evident, and is but another incidental indication of the thorough unity of purpose of the compiler. They may even be viewed as tacitly compensating for the abrupt introduction, at the commencement of the chapter, of the battle with the Philistines, and the slaughter on Mount Gilboa.

Ver. 1.—No abruptness marks this narration in 1 Sam. xxxi. On the contrary, it is there the natural conclusion of the wars between the Philistines and Saul. This engagement took place (1 Sam. xxviii. 4; xxix. 1, 11) on the plains of Jezreel. The name Jezreel marks either the *city* (Josh. xix. 18; 1 Kings xxi. 1, 11), or the celebrated *valley* or *plain* called in later times Esdraelon, the Greek form of the word. The plain in its largest proportions may be said to have been bounded by the Mediterranean (although it is called the plain of Acco, where it abuts on that sea) and the Jordan, and by the Samaria and Carmel ranges on the south and south-west, and those of Galilee on the north and north-east. While called a "plain" and "the great plain" in Judg. i. 8, its name in the Old Testament is "valley." It lay like a scalene triangle, with its apex in the direction of the Mediterranean, opening into the above-mentioned plain of Acco, and its sides going from right to left, about fifteen, twelve, and eighteen miles long respectively. The allusions to it in Old Testament history are frequent. Its exceeding richness is now turned into desolation unexceeded. Megiddo (Josh. xii. 21; Judg. i. 27), the city, centre of a smaller valley called by the same name (ch. vii. 29; Judg. v. 19), was situated within it, in the direction of Carmel. (For very full and interesting account of the Jezreel with which we have here to do, and of Esdraelon, see Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 336—356, edit. 1866.) Mount Gilboa identifies for us the exact battle-field of the text. It is the same with that on which Gideon triumphed (Judg. vii. 1, 8). It is in the lot of Issachar, flanked by the Little Hermon ridge on the north-east, and by Gilboa on the south-east, a mountain

range of ten miles long, about six hundred feet high, and mentioned only in the melancholy connection of this history. The flight of the men of Israel and of Saul was from the plain back to their position on Mount Gilboa, where they were pursued, overtaken, and slain. The modern name of the town Jezreel is Zerin, the depraved *aliases* of which appear as *Gerin* and *Zazzin* (Robinson's 'Bibl. Res.', iii. 162—165, 3rd edit.), and Jezreel, Shunem, and Beth-shean are the three most conspicuous places in this part of the whole plain of Esdraelon.

Ver. 2.—Followed hard after. The Hebrew verb implies all this and rather more, viz. that they made the pursuit of Saul and his sons their one special object. Luther's "Hingen sich an Saul" expresses this forcibly. Abinadab; or Ishu (see ch. viii. 33; 1 Sam. xiv. 49). The sons of Saul. Omit the article, which is not present in the Hebrew text. The fourth son, notwithstanding our ver. 6, survived (2 Sam. ii. 8—15).

Ver. 3.—The archers hit him. The literal translation would be, *the shooters, men with the bow, found him*. The context makes it plain that the meaning is that the arrows of the pursuers rather than the pursuers themselves "found" him, and these made him argue all the rest. To this our Authorized Version has jumped by the one word "hit" him. It is evident from ver. 8 that the Philistines did not find the body of Saul to recognize it till next day. And he was wounded of the archers. The radical meaning of the verb (*תַּקְרֵב*) is rather "to twist" (*torquere*) or "be twisted," "writh" (*torqueri*). And the meaning here is in harmony with it, that Saul trembled from fear or writhed with the pain already inflicted of the arrows. Hence the parallel passage couples with this same verb, the adverb *תַּקְרֵב*.

Ver. 4.—And abuse me. The main idea of the *Hithp.* of the verb here used is to satisfy the thirst of lust or cruelty. Saul probably feared not the abuse of mocking only, but that of torture. In the corresponding passage this verb is preceded by the clause, and thrust me through. His armour-bearer would not. He refused the request or bidding of Saul, no doubt mainly in respect of the fact that Saul was still "the anointed." We have a full description of both the loose arms and of the armour of the body in the case of the Philistine Goliath (1 Sam. xvii. 4—7). It is one of the world's surprising facts that the making of arms and armour, and the acquiring of skill in the using of them, should, as in fact all history attests, date from so early a period (Gen. xxxi. 26; xxxiv. 25). As compared with the history and the fragmentary remains of classical antiquity, those of Scrip-

ture are remarkably scanty on this subject. The sword is the earliest mentioned in Scripture, carried in a *sheath* (1 Sam. xvii. 51; 2 Sam. xx. 8; ch. xxi. 27); though the Hebrew word is here different from that used in Samuel. It was slung by a *girdle* (1 Sam. xxv. 13), rested on *hips* or *thigh* (2 Sam. xx. 8; Judg. iii. 16; Ps. xlvi. 3), and was sometimes "two-edged" (Judg. iii. 16; Ps. cxlii. 6). Then follows the spear in several varieties, as in 1 Sam. xvii. 7; ch. xi. 11; xx. 5; xxiii. 9. Again as a *javelin* (Josh. viii. 14-25; Job xxix. 23; 1 Sam. xvii. 6, where in the Authorized Version it is called target, or gorget). Again as a *lancet* (1 Kings xviii. 28; ch. xii. 8, 24; 2 Chron. xi. 12; Neh. iv. 13; Ezek. xxxix. 9). In addition to these three chief varieties of spear—the spear proper, the javelin, and the lancet—there is mention of two other weapons used at all events as the dart of a light kind would be used, in 2 Chron. xxiii. 10, and elsewhere, and in 2 Sam. viii. 14, respectively. After sword and spear rank the bow and arrow (Gen. xxi. 20; 1 Sam. xxxi. 3; ch. viii. 40; xii. 2; Ps. lxviii. 9; cxx. 4; Job vi. 4). And lastly, the sling (Judg. xx. 16; 1 Sam. xxv. 29; 2 Kings iii. 25), and a very strong weapon of the same kind mentioned in 2 Chron. xxvi. 15. The chief articles worn as bodily armour were the breastplate (1 Sam. xvii. 5, 38); the somewhat obscure *habergeon*, mentioned only twice, in no connection then of battle (Exod. xxviii. 32; xxxix. 23), the original name of which, *tacharath*, is found on Egyptian papyri of the nineteenth dynasty,—it seems to have been a species of doublet or corslet; the helmet (1 Sam. xvii. 5; ch. xxvi. 14; Ezek. xxvii. 10); greaves (1 Sam. xvii. 6); two kinds of shield (1 Sam. xvii. 7, 41, compared with 1 Kings x. 16; 2 Chron. ix. 15); and lastly the article mentioned in 2 Sam. viii. 7; ch. xviii. 7; 2 Kings xi. 10; 2 Chron. xxiii. 9; Cant. iv. 4; Jer. li. 11; Ezek. xxvii. 11; and of which we can say nothing certainly bearing upon its nature or its use, except that it was made of gold. Armour-bearers, then, the first distinct mention of whom we find in Judg. ix. 54, may well have been a necessity for kings and for the great. Joab had ten (2 Sam. xviii. 15). The word is not expressed as a compound in Hebrew, but as "one carrying (בְּלַבְבָּשׁ) arms."

Ver. 5.—And died. The parallel (1 Sam. xxxi. 5) adds "with him."

Ver. 6.—All his house. In place of these words, the parallel (1 Sam. xxxi. 6) has, "And his armour-bearer, and all his men, that same day together." This reading avoids the ambiguity referred to already (ver. 2). In either passage the moral is plain, that the end and ruin of Saul's family as a whole had arrived, rather than

literally that the whole, including every member, of that family had perished.

Ver. 7.—In the valley. In place of these words, the parallel (1 Sam. xxxi. 7) has, "On the other side of the valley, and . . . on the other side Jordan." We have here a clear instance of the desire of the compiler of Chronicles to compress his narrative, while the fidelity of the parallel narrative is testified in the naturalness of its statements, amounting to this, that, quick as the intelligence or report could reach all those Israelites who were at all within the range of the victorious Philistines, they hastened to vacate their abodes.

Ver. 8.—And his sons. The parallel (1 Sam. xxxi. 8) says explicitly, "And his three sons."

Ver. 9.—And when they had stripped him, they took his head, and his armour. Some comparing this with the parallel (1 Sam. xxxi. 9), "They cut off his head, and stripped off his armour," say "our author" leaves the beheading unmentioned! It is certainly sufficiently implied. To carry tidings unto their idols. This sentence is more clearly explained, and brought into rather unexpected and perhaps unwished accord with the most modern of our ecclesiastical habits, when in the parallel as above, we find "to publish it in the house of their idols" as the form of expression.

Ver. 10.—The house of their gods. In place of this general designation, the parallel (1 Sam. xxxi. 10) designates the house more exactly as "the house of Ashtaroth" (Gen. xiv. 5; the Phoenician female deity, as Baal was their male deity. The Greek form of the name is Astarte. See also Cic., 'De. Nat. Deo.', iii. 23). And fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. The parallel, as above, gives us, "And fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan" (which account is corroborated in 2 Sam. xxii. 12-14), and does not say what further was done with the head. It is no doubt remarkable that one historian puts on record the one fact and the other the other; and it is one of the clearer indications that both took from some common sources. It is perhaps something to be remarked also that, while the historian in Samuel says nothing further about the head (though allusion to it is probably included in the "body" and the "bones," the further account of which is given in vers. 12, 13, as well as in 2 Sam. xxii. 12-14), the compiler of Chronicles does revert to mention of "the body of Saul," ver. 12, *infra*, though without any corresponding naming of Beth-shan. Bertheau finds little difficulty in the question, by simply supposing that the omission in Chronicles is another instance of the desire to compress; while

others suppose corruption in our text, or, as Thenius and Ewald, the loss of a sentence to our text. After all said, the omission in Samuel of the fate of the head would seem to be fully as remarkable as the omission, so far as this verse is concerned, in Chronicles of the fate of the body. It is reasonable to suppose that the head and trunk of the body of Saul were brought together again, or it were likely some allusion to the contrary would have transpired in the following verses of this chapter or in 2 Sam. xxi. 12-14. With regard to the act of the Philistines in dedicating the armour of Saul, and fixing his head in the temple of Dagon, as though trophies, the custom was both ancient and not uncommon (Judg. xvi. 21-30; 1 Sam. v. 1-5; xxi. 9). The house of Dagon (Josh. xv. 41; xix. 27) here spoken of was that at Ashdod (Josh. xv. 47), between Gaza and Joppa. Though belonging to Judah's lot, it was never subdued by Israel, and remained throughout their history one of their worst foes. It is the Azotus of Acts viii. 40. There was another Dagon temple at Gaza (Judg. xvi. 21-31). Dagon's representation was the figure of a man, as to head, hands, and bust, but for the rest that of a fish, which was a symbol of fruitfulness. As Ashdod was situate on the extreme west of Palestine, so Beth-shan—generally written Beth-shean, a city of Manasseh (ch. vii. 29), though within the borders of Issachar (Josh. xvii. 11), from which the Canaanites were not expelled (Judg. i. 27)—was on the extreme east near the Jordan. It was afterwards called Scythopolis. Considering the distance these were apart, and their contrary directions, we may suppose that some suggestion was intended by the fixing the head in the one place and the body in the other.

Ver. 12.—*Jabesh*. This is the only place where "Jabesh" is used as an abbreviation for Jabesh-gilead, of which it was the chief city. Gilead comprised the lots of Reuben and Gad (Numb. xxxii. 1-5, 25-32, 39-41) and of half Manasseh (ch. xxvii. 21). Saul had on a celebrated occasion (1 Sam. xi. 1-13) befriended the people of Jabesh-gilead, coming to their rescue

against Nahath the Ammonite, of which kindness they are now mindful, show that rarest of virtues, gratitude to a fallen monarch, and are further on (2 Sam. ii. 5) commended for it by David. This verse does not tell us, as the parallel (1 Sam. xxxi. 12) does, of the first burning of the bodies, and then of the burying of the calcined bones. The silence is very remarkable. It does name the kind of tree, the "oak" or "terebinth." The word for the tree, however, in both passages is of doubtful and perhaps only generic signification. The several Hebrew words translated in various places as "oak," all share a common root, significant of the idea of *strength*. Dr. Thomson ('The Land and the Book,' pp. 243, 244) says that the country owns still to an abundance of oaks of very fine growth in some cases, and that these are exceedingly more plentiful and altogether a stronger tree than the "terebinth." The different names, though all connected with one root, referred to are probably owing to the large variety of oaks. With the statement of the burying of the bones under a tree, and the fasting of seven days on the part of these brave and grateful men of Jabesh-gilead, the parallel account comes to its end.

Ver. 13.—So Saul died for his transgression. (For this transgression and the stress laid upon it and its predicted consequences, see 1 Sam. xv. 1-9, 11, 14; xxviii. 18.) For asking . . . of . . . a familiar spirit (1 Sam. xxviii. 7-24).

Ver. 14.—And inquired not of the Lord. Saul seems to have, in point of fact, inquired in *some* sense (1 Sam. xiv. 37; xxviii. 5, 6, 15). But the probable meaning is that he did *not* inquire in the first instance (see vers. 3, 4); and when he did inquire, he did not await the reply solely and exclusively of Jehovah. Therefore he slew him (so see ch. ii. 3). David the son of Jesse. The compiler, having heretofore given so scrupulously whatever of genealogical fact he could, is now careful to use it. And he identifies the future chief hero of his history as him who had already been instanced (ch. ii. 15), "son of Jesse."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The epitaph, a beacon-warning.* So far as this work is concerned, Saul is introduced to us, and takes "for ever" his farewell of us, in this one and the same chapter. We know him, however, well elsewhere. On the background of a bright sky, we are at once prepared to say, his figure stands out, and ever will stand out, dark in appearance, of somewhat commanding proportions, with the bearing of no altogether ordinary man—a striking figure, indeed, but one that strikes fear and a chill feeling throughout one, rather than one that inspires reverence, emulation, love. It cannot be said of him or of his career that they lack incident or dramatic effect.

On the contrary, they were born in these and abound in them. Saul and his career were remarkably differenced from anything which could be called commonplace. And while the world continues, they must needs stand among the foremost examples for impressiveness, of grand opportunity and splendid prospects grievously missed and dis-honoured. Our chapter is itself but a summary, the concluding snatch of a strange, eventful, solemn life, to the condemning faults of which, in its course, the present text points. And we, following a similar plan, will pass beneath our eye, in brief summary, the prominent facts, the moral qualities, and the opportunities of Saul; the troubled current on which they are hurried along, the dark abyss in which at last they are lost. Let us notice—

I. SAUL'S SUMMONS FROM OBSCURITY TO THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY AND THE FULL GLARE OF DAY. What we have to notice, especially about this, is that undoubtedly it was the doing of an upper power, of a special providence, of no purpose nor seeking of the man who was thus elevated, nor even of the contrivance of others. It was something *outside* of the individual life and outside the national life. No calculation of coincidence could count upon it nor account for it. In the presence of it, the man who disbelieves Providence and providences, and special and particular providences, because they make too large a demand on his fund of belief, prefers parsimoniously to spare expenditure in one direction, in order to lavish unscrupulous, disproportionate outlay in another. What he *can* believe, this he drains to the dregs in one of its resources, because he will not draw a fair measure of it from another. Of him it may well be said that the heart that refuses a healthy faith is that which grows the most abundant crop of credulity. The kingdom of God's people—only known as yet for a kingdom, inasmuch as he himself was its King—has reached one of its great crises. Moses foresaw it, and, strange to say, foreshadowed and sketched the legislation adapted to it. The special ministers, consisting of individual and local judges, have had their day. The majority of the nation dawns consciously upon it. The nation compares its composite, federal, fraternal constitution with the unity and cohesion of other nations, foes around; and, blessed though it is in comparison of them, yet deliberately estimates the balance as unfavourable to itself. Nay, Samuel himself, at this time by a moral force and growth the one judge and prophet of nearly the whole people, seems raised up at the moment to suggest that that embodiment of authority in one person—"a king that might judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles"—was quite within the range of possibility in the midst of themselves. In fact, the national voice, in a remarkable way and with a remarkable unanimity, had pronounced for this. But no man, no name even, was before them for king. They express no wish, ask no choice, solicit no help nor advice from Samuel on this particular point, but seem to leave it entirely with him (1 Sam. viii. 22), and he leaves it entirely with God. Saul, however, a young man whose only known distinction at present is of tallness and bodily "goodliness," by a little chain of circumstances as uncertain from one to another as they were trivial in themselves, finds himself in the presence of Samuel, the seer of the tribes. The supreme Seer of the nation, God himself, has already instructed Samuel; and the issue is that Saul, "of the smallest of the tribes of Israel," his "family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin" (1 Sam. ix. 21), is called to be king over all God's people! This was "the Lord's doing, and marvellous was it in the eyes" of Saul, at all events, as we are expressly told.

II. SAUL'S CONVERSION. It was a conversion of the old day, of the old Church, also of the old yet ever new Spirit. How stirred the heart, the thoughts, the amazement of Saul at the new future which had been so suddenly presented before him! We may well understand that he could not, did not, take it in all at once. But his heart was to know a greater stirring, a deeper moving. "God gave him another heart" before ever he got back to his earthly father's house again. "The Spirit of God came upon him" (1 Sam. x. 9, 10). The great facts of conversion for the old day, for the old Church, and for all time are intrinsically the same, and are two—*God's gift of another heart* and of *his Spirit* therewith. And what transporting experience that must have been for him, when "all the signs" which had been given him by Samuel "came to pass;" and when "he prophesied" among the company of prophets that met him; and when, at his formal anointing, "all the people shouted, God save the king!" and when, at the close of that solemn day, he went to Gibeah, and "there went with him a

band of men, whose hearts God had touched," also! Could there have been a more striking, a fuller, a richer beginning of a new religious life, and one shaped to highest ends? Who could ever lose the memory, the impressions, the force of hallowed resolutions belonging to such a time?

III. THE FACT OF THE GREAT OUTER OPPORTUNITIES WHICH THE POSITION OF SAUL AND THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD COMBINED TO PROFFER TO SAUL. Outer opportunity is not everything, and indeed it is not anything where inner fitness and intrinsic gift and the spirit of a mission may not be present. But otherwise, outer opportunity is matter of *great* advantage. As the plant must flower and the tree must fruit, in order to develop to the highest advantage, so thought and purpose, feeling and love, and all life of man, crave the help of some outer opportunity. They find *expression* thereby, and, in finding expression, unfailingly develop power and quality. God, no doubt, measures opportunity justly, wisely, kindly to us all. And where any child of his may find or fancy he finds himself cramped and stinted in such respect, there may be overpoweringly good reasons for it, of a kind difficult for us to trace with any dogmatic assurance at present; and there may be found overwhelmingly ample compensation for it later on in life, or when the span of the present life is passed. Yet can there be little doubt that, so far as the present life taken by itself is concerned, many a beautiful soul pines away for want of outer opportunity of action and of exhibition? many a mighty courage dwarfs its growth? many a great heart *infolds* its rich powers and qualities, instead of *unfolding* them? An old Roman exile poet, who exchanged sunny Rome for the forbidding Pontus, and who shivered as he wrote it, said, "What am I to do alone? How can I utilize enforced idleness? How speed the day unhallowed by work? When disappointment is my only pay, when to dance in the dark is my mocking destiny, when to write a poem that *can* find no reader is my fate,—then I learn how much the speaker depends on the heaver, and the fostering of virtue depends on the awarding of praise, and how immense the stimulus of glory's opportunity." This old heathen seized and put into most effective poetry some of life's most affecting facts. Now, to the unbroken length of Saul's public life, an uninterrupted series of inspiring opportunity was undeniably proffered, both of God and man. Zeal that knew no bounds, enthusiasm that threatened to consume intelligent devotion that should disdain and fling even to an infinite distance all the petty interferences of the brood of envy and jealousy and suspicion's spawn,—these were the legitimate expectations of a whole world, from the grand sphere of opportunity in the midst of which Saul presided. Some of them he realized, and he began well, and did "awhile run well."

IV. SOME OF THE LEADING INDICATIONS OF SAUL'S QUALITIES OF CHARACTER. For instance, before his call, we find him the faithful, trusted, considerate son (1 Sam. ix. 5). The very tone of his recorded conversation with his servant (1 Sam. ix. 6—10) impresses us favourably, as affable, respectful, and open to suggestion and to reply. The master, especially if a young man, who knows how to unite such qualities as these in his treatment of his servants, may well beget the prepossessions of the very best judges—for the virtue is rare. Then at the time of his private call and the first communications made to him by Samuel, he does not disappoint us for modesty, retiringness, unostentatious reticence and guardedness of the tongue. No boastful word was on his lip, no eager ambition grasped at what lay before him; the opposite of even family vain-glory seems to have characterized him (1 Sam. ix. 21; x. 16). At the time of his public call and Divine election from among the tribes, he would fain hide from the honour, and decline the exalted responsibility about to be laid upon him (1 Sam. x. 21—24). And he crowned the day with an instance of self-mastery, temperateness, forbearance (1 Sam. x. 27, compared with xi. 12, 13). The promptness of righteous indignation and zeal of resolution were very conspicuous in the dashing engagement by which he delivered those of Jabesh-gilead in the hour of the Ammonites' power (1 Sam. xi. 4—11), and they were witnessed to by the aid and effectual blessing of the "Spirit of God." The events of that day also were crowned with renewed consecration, with sacrifices of thanksgiving, and with a sacred and general joy on the part of "Saul and all the men of Israel." Yet from this point all went amiss. The strange reversal of all that Saul had formerly seemed began with the unwarrantable impatience and unpardonable presumption which found him anticipating Samuel and sacrificing to the Lord in Gilgal. This was, no doubt, the self-willed presumption on which his whole career was

now wrecked. It was succeeded by fault after fault of wayward "rebellion," and of wilful "stubbornness" (1 Sam. xv. 23), of alleged "fear of the people" and craving to be "honoured" before them (1 Sam. xv. 24, 30), till the ominous knell is heard, and his conversion "by the Spirit of the Lord" is reversed, when "the Spirit of the Lord departed" from him (1 Sam. xvi. 14). The sequel is too well known. Jealousy of his successor, fierce fits of passion and fits of brief repentance, outbursts of short-lived affection and visitations of remorse, unattended by any single symptom of real reformation, argued the torn, distracted, disordered spirit within. He is brave in war; he is cowardly in the massacre of the priests; he is high in spirit and high-handed; he is morbidly sensitive to disgrace. He seals the Spirit's departure and final forsaking of him when, with a formal, faithless, professional inquiry of the Lord, he really makes his inquiry of the witch, and fills up the measure of his iniquities. It is hard to say whether the manner of his death (on the field of flight rather than of battle) expressed most aptly his better or worse quality, but anyway it was not altogether deficient in self-devotion or spirit, such as the circumstances would allow. Yet what a commentary the barest facts now utter forth! He who had often conquered the Philistines and other hostile nations, with little of material help, fell before them, because he had guiltily forfeited the Divine help. He had presumed on himself—it brings him to make an end of himself! As repentance had been the stranger of his company, so now despair is the bosom friend he hugs. And trace as best we may the course he ran, his character, and the end of a life which had opened in providence so abundant and so encouraging, the skilled pen of Scripture guides our last thought, and reveals the just conclusion of the whole matter: "Saul died for his transgressions which he committed against the Lord, even against the Word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking . . . of . . . a familiar spirit, to inquire thereof, and he inquired not of the Lord"—this low-lying epitaph, a beacon of warning set up aloft to all time.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 6, 13.—"The mighty fallen!" The death of Saul and Jonathan, upon the heights of Gilboa, is one of the grandest and most awful episodes in Hebrew history. Behold the chosen of God, the hero and the idol of Israel, wounded by the archers, supplicating death from his armour-bearer, falling in despair upon his sword! Princes and warriors, "swifter than eagles, stronger than lions;" Saul and Jonathan "are slain in the high places." "The shields of the mighty are vilely cast away!" The king's sons and his body-guards and the flower of his army perish with him on this awful day. "How are the mighty fallen!" But let us turn from the dramatic, the tragic side of this incident, to ponder its spiritual lessons.

I. Saul's appalling fate reminds us of GREAT POWERS MISUSED. The gigantic stature and amazing strength of the son of Kish naturally impressed all beholders, and conciliated—almost commanded—the respect and confidence of the people. But he was more than an athlete, he was a general who had delivered his country and gained many victories over his enemies. He appears to have possessed great qualities, not only of body, but of mind. All this gave Saul great advantages. If he had but used these aright, he would have retained the regard of his subjects and the allegiance of the brave, and he might have lived to old age, in possession of the dignity and power of kingship. But his moody, wilful spirit gave a wrong bias to his energies. His was a wonderful but a wasted life. The valour and skill which had defeated the Philistines in his early days might have defeated them now. But Saul was not the same man as of old. Even so many, whom God has richly endowed with gifts of body and of mind, have proved themselves unworthy of these gifts, have misused them in such manner that it had been better for them that they had never been born. To whom God has given much, of them he requires the more.

II. We observe here A LOFTY VOCATION ILL UNDERSTOOD AND ILL FULFILLED. Saul was the first of Israel's kings. Anointed by Samuel, chosen by lot, elected by the acclamation of the people, he entered upon the kingly office with every omen and every prospect of success. Called to be, not, like one of the judges, the chief of a tribe or a temporary deliverer, but the ruler of a nation and a king for life, Saul might have

raised his people to independence and to power. But he was disobedient to the voice of the seer, he was unfaithful to the cause of the God who raised him to eminence and invested him with theocratic authority ; and he reaped the bitter harvest of disobedience and unfaithfulness. To some position, with some vocation, the Author of our life has called each one of us. Not only kings and rulers, pastors and Church officers, but all Christians, in every station of life, have committed to them a peculiar and sacred trust. Let each ask—How is this trust fulfilled?

III. There is exemplified here the possibility of **TRUE RELIGION BEING KNOWN AND YET FORSAKEN**. In his early life, Saul had put within him another heart, and became another man. But there are signs that he came under heathen influences. Certainly one of the last acts of his life was indicative of superstition, when he sought unto the witch of Endor, instead of looking to Jehovah for counsel and encouragement. He “inquired not of the Lord.” It was a grievous defection ; he, whose religious life commenced so brightly under the guidance of Samuel, came to grovel before an ignorant necromancer ! A lesson this of human instability, frailty, and fickleness. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall !” Alas ! how often has the bright promise of youth been clouded in maturer years, and the sun which rose in splendour sunk beneath the gloomy clouds ! It is a solemn warning which none should disregard.

IV. We are informed that **THE FALL OF THIS FIRST KING OF ISRAEL WAS A DIVINE JUDGMENT**. “Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord.” We are seldom at liberty authoritatively and confidently to pronounce calamity a judgment from the Lord. But in the case before us we are expressly warranted in doing so. Saul had violated the Divine Law. He had directed sacrifice to be offered without the permission of the prophet. He had spared Agag, and appropriated the spoil. He had displayed, again and again, a rebellious and ungodly disposition ; had given way to impulses of anger, envy, jealousy, and fear. He had too often despised God’s Word, persecuted God’s servants, trusted in himself, and forgotten that Jehovah had called him to be the leader of his people in righteousness. Now at length the long-delayed retribution came upon the guilty monarch. “The Lord slew him.” A warning to the impenitent, this terrible fate of Saul should summon the sinner to repentance, and (thank God !) to “repentance unto life.”—T.

Vers. 1—10.—Understanding the end. The psalmist (Ps. lxxiii.) was much perplexed and perturbed in spirit “when he saw the prosperity of the wicked.” He was disposed to think that he had “cleansed his heart in vain,” and in vain “washed his hands in innocency” (Ps. lxxiii. 13). But on further and deeper thought, he arrived at a sound conclusion. When he “went into the sanctuary of God,” i.e. when he looked at the matter in the light of Divine truth, then he “understood their end.” If any one should wonder at Saul’s continued prosperity, should wonder *where God was* that a man whose hands were so stained with blood should so long be seated on a throne, he would only have to wait and see the end to know that “verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.” We learn from these verses—

I. **THAT WE CANNOT TELL WHETHER HUMAN LIFE WILL PROVE TO BE ENVIOUS TILL IT IS CONCLUDED.** The ancients said, “Call no man happy till he is dead.” The epigram was the outcome of the fact, finding frequent illustration, that men who were supposed to be most enviable proved, after all, to be those with whom few would willingly exchange conditions. In the heyday of Saul’s power and prominence there must have been many Israelites who wished that such happy fortune had been theirs ; that the kingly lot had fallen on their tribe, on their family, on themselves (1 Sam. x. 20, 21). But who, now, would wish to have been the first King of Israel, to have run his checkered course, to have been driven to such sad and guilty shifts, and to have terminated a career in such ruinous dishonour as that which closed his clouded life ? To be miserably beaten, to be utterly routed in battle (ver. 3), to be driven to suicide in order to avoid the worst abuses (ver. 4), to know, before he died, that his house was perishing with him (ver. 5), to be dishonoured by the enemy after death (ver. 9), to have his body taken and exposed in the temple of an idol (ver. 10),—all this was the last extreme of humiliation and disaster. Envy not those whose outward career seems enviable. Who knows what miseries are within ; what madness reclines at the royal hearth ; what wretchedness reposes under the princely roof ; what jealousy drives in the

gilded chariot ; what insatiable hatred or inapaeasable remorse sits down to the sumptuous meal ? Who knows in what black clouds of calamity the sun of human greatness will set ? Who can tell whether the end will not, like Saul's, be such an end that all the brightness and the excellency that went before will be utterly eclipsed, and that all men will join to say, " What a miserable man was he ! "

II. THAT ONE MAN'S SIN INVOLVES MANY MEN'S SUFFERING. Because Saul had sinned, " the men of Israel fled, . . . and fell down slain " (ver. 1). Because their faulty king had fallen, " the men of Israel . . . forsook their cities . . . and the Philistines came and dwelt in them " (ver. 7). Sinful sovereigns have entailed heavy penalties on suffering nations. But it is not kings only that cause human hearts to bleed, and that fill human lives with trouble and distress. How many thousands of homes are the abodes of sorrow, of keen disappointment, of cruel suffering, of dark foreboding, because one soul has forsaken God and made shipwreck of a good conscience !

III. THAT OUTWARD FORTUNE IS NO SAFE CRITERION OF HUMAN CHARACTER. Jonathan perished on the same field with Saul ; the brave and generous son with his jealous and murderous father ! " Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment " (John vii. 24).

IV. THAT MEN SOMETIMES TACITLY CONFESS THEIR OWN FOLLY. " They sent . . . to carry tidings unto their idols " (ver. 9)—*to inform their gods !* Surely they were thus condemning their own idolatry. How often do we condemn ourselves !—C.

Vers. 11-14.—The moral of misfortune. The setting of the sun of the first King of Israel in such dark clouds has its truth to tell as well as its shadows to throw. We may learn—

I. THAT OUR WORST MISFORTUNES BRING OUT THE BEST FEELINGS OF OUR FRIENDS. " When all Jabesh-gilead heard," etc. (vers. 11, 12). Saul, in his earlier and better days, had risen to the height of a noble opportunity and delivered this city from impending ruin by an act of great energy and courage (1 Sam. xi.). And when the last misfortune had befallen their deliverer, and the worst indignities were practised on his dead body, the men of Jabe-h-gilead remembered what they owed him, gave free play to their gratitude, summoned up their courage, and rescued his dishonoured remains from the hands of the insolent enemy. It was worthily done ; their best traits were drawn out by the dire calamity of their friend. So it is always and everywhere. It is one of the mitigations of our misery that the kindest and most generous feelings are then displayed toward us by those who love us. Sickness, loss, disappointment, bereavement, the larger and deeper sorrows of human life, evoke all that is most tender, gracious, and Christ-like in the human soul. In truth, we do not know the depth of the affection with which our kindred and our friends are loving us until some saddening experience calls out all the latent sympathy that lies within their hearts. Better things as well as worse things than we ordinarily suppose reside within us ; when the occasion comes they rise to the surface and show themselves to the eyes of men. The crushing blow which strikes us to the ground is one of these occasions. Then human love comes forth to render its truest and choicest ministry.

II. THAT TRANSGRESSION WILL CERTAINLY BE OVERTAKEN BY PENALTY IN DUE TIME. " Saul died for his transgression " (ver. 13). Retribution may have seemed tardy ; it may have seemed to Saul as if he would " escape the judgment of God." Days, months, years, passed by and the blow fell not. The thought of his heart may have been, " I am safe now ; the wrath of God would have descended if it were coming ; I am secure ; my mountain stands strong." But if he thus thought he was mistaken. Penalty was on its way, " leaden-footed but iron-handed," slow of step but sure of stroke, and the days of his life and of his power were numbered. His transgression was twofold. 1. Disobedience : he " kept not the word of the Lord " (ver. 13). 2. Departure from God : he " inquired not of the Lord," but he " asked counsel of one that had a familiar spirit " (vers. 13, 14). Instead of resorting to God through his prophet, " as he did aforetime," he had recourse to the forbidden and dangerous arts of necromancy, thus forsaking the Lord, and putting his trust in a miserable and delusive system of imposture. His punishment, like his sin, was twofold. 1. His own death : the Lord " slew him." 2. The overthrow of all his hopes and plans : " he turned the kingdom unto David " (ver. 14). Our transgression and our penalty often take

these two forms. (1) First come disobedience and departure. We do not the things which God enjoins; neglecting that which, above all things, is his will concerning us (John vi. 39, 40). We depart from his side and his service, seeking our well-being in other sources of joy (Jer. ii. 13). (2) Then come death and overthrow. Our soul dies; its finer feelings disappear, its truer thoughts give place to false imaginings, its better hopes die down, its wiser aspirations sink and are lost; the shadows of spiritual death fall upon us. And with our own destruction comes the dispersion of our plans and expectations: the "kingdom is turned away;" the "wood, hay, and stubble" of a false life are consumed in the fires of God. Our life-work is overthrown and lost. The tower we took so long to build is in the dust.—C.

Ver. 14 (with ver. 4).—Divine and human agency. In the last verse of this chapter that event is ascribed to the hand of God which, in the fourth verse, is accounted for by the act of Saul. "He [the Lord] slew him" (ver. 14). "So Saul took a sword," etc. (ver. 4). As both statements are true, there must be a consistency between them. Evidently the one result was due to more than one agency. The Lord had something to do with Saul's death; Saul also had much to do with it himself. We may see—

I. SAUL'S AGENCY IN BRINGING ABOUT HIS END. He contributed to the final result by: 1. Acting in such wise as to make his death due to his folly. 2. Taking, generally, those steps which led to the final catastrophe. 3. Putting into play the physical causes which immediately effected it. He would not have died at the time and in the way he did, had he not been personally responsible in these three ways.

II. GOD'S DIVINE AGENCY IN DETERMINING THE ISSUE. 1. It was in accordance with his Divine desire. He desires that righteousness should be fully vindicated, sin attended with its penalty as well as integrity with its reward, by the events which happen on the earth. Saul's death was desirable from the standpoint of the supreme Judge. 2. He permitted it to occur. He saw no reason to interpose so that it should not be the last link in the chain of circumstances then being forged. 3. He so ordered events that this should be the issue. So far as he did touch the chain of human affairs with his intervening hand, he so touched it that this occurrence would take place. In some measure it was due, positively, to the outworking of his Divine hand. In regard to the great subject of Divine and human agency co-operating, as they do, to produce one result, we conclude: 1. That God might work out his designs by direct volition, but does use human instrumentality. 2. That what may seem to us, at the time, to be solely due to our agency may be the accomplishment of his purpose. His permitting, controlling, directing hand may be found to be much nearer than we think, to have had a much larger share in the issue than we imagine. 3. That if the hand of God is in such events as this, we may be sure that it is present in things of another and higher order. If it could be said concerning a suicide, "the Lord slew him," how much more may it be said concerning desirable, admirable, useful achievements, that God brings them about? If the evil which happens to the city come of him (Amos iii. 6), much more shall we say that he who builds all things is God (Heb. iii. 4)? Therefore: (1) Let the perverse and impenitent beware. The omniscient eye of the Holy and the Just One is on them and upon their lives, and his retributive hand may show itself at any point in their career. (2) Let the righteous take heart and hope. God is with them; he is working for them and in them and through them. He will sanctify and use their efforts for the outworking of his own gracious end, for the establishment of his holy kingdom.—C.

Ver. 4.—A great might-have-been: Saul, King of Israel. "So, Saul took a sword, and fell upon it." It is useful to study achievements for inspiration, and failures for warning. Here we have a great "might-have-been," or one of those cases in which everything conspired to make a noble future possible, and yet, through unfortunate misdirection, life ended darkly, and all better success of earlier stages was clouded by adversity and failure. It is not death in battle, nor even defeat, which makes us lament him. Nelson died in battle, but in glory as well. And defeat is an incident that all armies may experience. It is that it is a dark close to a darker history. That beginning brightly, clouds gathered over his life, and deepened until they closed in night. Consider—(1) *This might-have-been*; and (2) *its lessons to us*.

I. **THIS MIGHT-HAVE-BEEN.** If ever a life had fair opening and opportunity, it was Saul's. 1. *Every personal advantage that could be desired was his.* Good looks above all in Israel; immense strength of bodily frame; mental qualities to match; wisdom and courage suitable for a king;—qualities that gained for him the regard of Israel and the reverence of David, and, what is very noteworthy, the affection of Samuel. Then his circumstances were of that sort that most persons would envy him. He came of one of the wealthiest families in all the south country. He was so naturally selected for king that there was no difficulty in securing allegiance of people. A few murmur, as was to be expected from such as were themselves candidates for the throne or backed such as were. But the support of Samuel, and the success of first expedition against Ammon, stilled all murmurs through the land. None disputed his title to the throne. 2. *Opportunity favoured him.* His election proved the *waking of Israel.* The same energy which craved a leader inspired willingness to follow. Samuel's influence was exerted on his behalf. That meant backing of mightiest in land. Nor was it formal only. Samuel protested against wish of Israel to have a king. But protesting against the general wish for a king, he did not proceed to protest against the particular choice. So far from disapproving of Saul, he loved him, and, when he could do no more, he mourned with the sorrow of a saint and patriot over Saul's failure. Then he found the grandest service available. There were Abner, David, Jonathan, the worthies following David, all ready to aid; and, above all, God ready to help him. Besides room for him, there was need for him. Israel was in low water. So everything conspired to create a grand opportunity. 3. *And no thing in character made grand life impossible.* He comes before us with many qualities which engage respect. (1) There is *modesty*, which accepts greatness as a charge rather than eagerly covets it. (2) *Generosity*, which tolerates with brave wisdom the disaffection of minority. (3) *Courage*, that suits his calling and his country's needs. (4) *Kindliness of heart.* One must not overlook this quality; the more so as he sins so deeply in the opposite direction. But he "loved David greatly;" suggesting that he was capable of great affections, and, but for bias, might have been remembered as like father of his noble son. Then there was some working of *piety* in him; *not much*, but still apparently some. He had a sensitive nature, which occasionally, in higher moments, admitting play of Spirit of God on it, made him prophesy in an exalted strain. Though, in other moments, same sensitiveness lays him open to influences of spirit not of God. But there is susceptibility. Everything thus seems to concur to make life not only moderate but brilliant success. *Power, opportunity, circumstances, advantages, natural endowment*,—all in favour. And God, always waiting to make best of us, sought to make the best of him. And if he had but walked with God, what service he might have rendered, and what joy in life have won! But, alas! amidst all these supreme advantages and natural probabilities of success, there is *one defect* of character which mars everything. There is a *wilfulness*, which is left unrestrained; a habit of choosing his own path and keeping to it; impatience of any restraint of religion or duty. If Samuel comes not in time, no reverence for sanctity of priestly office will prevent his assuming its functions. If God prescribes utter destruction of Amalek, he will carry out precept, *excepting* where he thinks it better to disobey it, saving cattle, oxen (*i.e.* the best of spoil), and Agag. David becomes, by service he renders, a possible rival. His existence, therefore, Saul will not tolerate. *Self-will, declining (1) the restraints of religion, and (2) those of conscience*, early appears in him. He is never *humbly obedient*, but picks and chooses what part of precept he likes, stopping short of a whole obedience. Always feeling at liberty to revise and moderate the requirements of God, he thus *comes short*, through wilfulness, of God's requirements. The self-will that declines to serve heartily soon ceases to serve at all. And after he has wrought great deliverances and secured independence of Israel, a long, dark period ensues, unrelieved by nobler quality—one in which his path is downward. *The very energy* which, restrained and ordered, would have been of vast service, unrestrained, becomes terror to his friends. That firmness of nerve-formation which, consecrated, would have lain his nature open to God, unconsecrated lays him open to invasion of evil spirit, to madness and fury. His action is disapproved by his best friends, by Jonathan, by nation, by his own heart. And wasting powers of nature in following David, he sinks lower and lower, till eve of last battle finds him in sheer despair. There is something terrible in hopelessness with which he addresses ghost of

Samuel : “ God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, . . . therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.” Something touching in way in which, to the end, he believes in *Samuel*, and longs to hear again something from his lips, and prefers to hear his doom from him if he has to hear it at all. And disobedience leading to despair, the two soon lead to destruction. Oh what a loss was absence of *David* on that battle-day! Just for *want of him*, with his heroic following, fate of battle adverse. And there is deplorable defeat where there would have been grandest victory. All that Saul got by opposing David was a sadder life, a shorter reign, a darker fate. And, instead of his ranking with great heroes that have wrought *deliverance* in the earth, he stands a majestic, melancholy *might-have-been*, and nothing more. A truncated life; a casting spoilt in the moulding. The mere possibility of such a thing should rouse solicitude in all our hearts.

II. WHAT LESSONS EMERGE FROM THIS? This is the second point I have to dwell on. 1. *Likelihoods are not certainties*. Your career may have every prospect of being honourable, useful, happy. But probability is not certainty. Whether probability realized will depend altogether and exclusively on *degree of faithfulness you manifest*. 2. Danger of *self-will*. “ Our wills are ours to make them Thine,” says poet, nobly uttering grand philosophy of life. But *reservation of some thing from God* is one of the commonest temptations. We say, “ We will do *much*, but not *this*. We will sacrifice *much*, but not *this*. We will follow, but will choose our own time and our own way.” Especially are we liable to be deflected from path of duty when *waywardness* of will strengthened by some strong passion—greed, revenge, dislike. Let us beware of this *self-will*. *It has a look of force and energy; but it really destroys both*. It changes the may-be into the might-have-been. We cannot be Christ’s disciples unless we deny self and follow him. Self-will never is allowed in any soul without consequences of saddest kind. Therefore : 3. Let us take our Saviour as *entire Master*. Give him absolute control. Withhold nothing. The more consecrated we are, the more glorified we shall be. Man keeps back nothing from Christ save to his own hurt. You give up nothing but to your profit. Don’t let our lives be mere *might-have-beens*. But keep faithfully to the path of duty as shown by Christ, and then, although men of grandest early advantages and powers make grievous shipwreck, you, with no advantages and no special power, will find that “ that which concerneth you God will perfect.”—G.

Vers. 11, 12.—*A deed of honour*. “ And when all Jabesh-gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul, they arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.” It is well to study deeds of honour. Honour is integrity, gratitude, or courage in its finest bloom. If we aim no higher than the fulfilment of our legal obligations, our action will be apt to droop beneath that meagre level. Courage is an essential quality of faith. Gratitude a fine grace, which fosters the growth of every other. So that to aim at honourable action is essential if we would live a worthy life. Sometimes a Falstaff gives us a philosophy of honour, sounding very shrewd, but really very shallow. Sometimes Judas is followed in his example of cynical criticism, and we begin to ask, *Cui bono?* “ To what purpose is this waste ? ” Mary’s anointing of the Saviour “ for his burial; ” the honour done here, at great risk, to the dead Saul; the honour done David, when men cut their way through a host to bring him a draught of water from the well of Bethlehem;—are above such critics. They see no use in such activities. They believe in money and in power, in avoiding injuries and gathering comforts. But fine enthusiasms, high devotion, costly tributes of affection, they cannot understand. But some can. The writer of the Book of Samuel could see a beauty in this act of Jabesh-gilead, and relates it as something that gives a little relief to the darkness of the field of Gilboa. The author of the Chronicles felt it worth recording. David blessed them for their courage and their gratitude. It is worth our while simply to ponder the noble deed. To make this victory as crushing in its humiliation for Israel as proud for the cities of the Philistines, Saul’s head is put in the temple of Dagon, and his body, dismembered, is hung insultingly on the walls of Beth-shan. Jabesh-gilead was a city about six miles to the east, as Beth-shan was about six miles to the west of Jordan. It had owed to the energy of

Saul, immediately on his accession to the kingdom, that it was saved from the cruel fate which Nahash the Ammonite intended and seemed able to inflict. When shame, grief, a tender memory of the service rendered by Saul in the days of his youth rise up within them, they resolve that, whatever risk has to be faced, whatever dangerous eminence their very success may make for them, they will do honour to the dead. If they cannot save his life, they can risk their own to give him a worthy burial. And so, not tarrying, they rise up by night, and by the morning the dead bodies of Saul and his heroic sons are in a friendly city. All the honour that can be shown is given in the decent burial and the week of fasting. The poor, spiteful triumph of the Philistines is curtailed, and the nation, beginning to sink in despondency, wakes up to feel there are still heroic spirits in its midst, that can beard the enemy even when flushed with victory. Several things are noteworthy here.

I. DEATH IS NOT ALTOGETHER LOSS. It ended Saul's life, but it increased his influence. Yesterday criticized, censured, object of apprehension ; to-day he is revered even in his deepest failure. All now is forgotten of visitations of evil spirit, envy of David, unfortunate division which lost them the help of David in this time of their nation's need. Instead of which they remember him as he delivered Gibeon and conquered the Philistines ; how sometimes he prophesied ; how no family in the land had shown itself more brave than his ; how, when he was really himself, none was manlier or more generous. And now Saul, dead, takes his place once more in the heart of a nation's love. And as David forgot all his injuries to celebrate his praise, so Jabesh-gilead forgets her weakness and the absence of all help, to rise and do him honour. Mark Antony spoke wrongly when he said—

“The evil that men do lives after them ;
The good is oft interred with their bones.”

It is the good men do lives after them, and all their faults are buried in their graves. Remember the canonizing touch of death ; how it rounds off the memory of the life, softens ill feeling, lets the better nature have its proper influence over others.

II. DEEDS OF KINDLY SERVICE ARE LONG REMEMBERED. It is nearly forty years since Saul had saved Jabesh-gilead from the hand of Nahash. Most of those then saved from the ignominy and mutilation which were to be the terms of capitulation, had died. It was another generation that had risen, and you would hardly have been surprised if they had felt no particular gratitude for so remote a favour. But with all its defects, human nature is not so void of finer feelings as some would paint it. In estimating the deficiency of gratitude, it has to be remembered how exaggerated sometimes are our estimates of service rendered, and how we expect shillings' worth of service to be requited by pounds' worth of gratitude. We must remember, too, how often the service is mixed with disservice ; the graciousness of the act of help destroyed in the way of rendering it ; a gift is accompanied with a scold, or with a threat, or with an intimation of the reluctance with which it is done, or with a degree of patronage that humiliates the receiver. In such cases grateful return is hardly due. The persons rendering help have taken out their payment for it in self-complacency or superiority. But when these faults do not mar the graciousness of help, is gratitude so rare ? Kindly natures, whose experience is most large, are never found complaining of ingratitude. They rather agree with the poet, who reports that the gratitude of men had oftener left him mourning. The true benefactors of a nation, what gratitude invests their memory ! The kindly natured have a reward which they at least feel far surpassing all their merits. If in an humble position, love flows forth toward them for their modest offices of neighbourly affection, they are honoured by the confidence of men, and their character is that which their fellows copy. If in somewhat higher position, how does the reverence and kindly feeling of a whole city invest the life of honourable kindness ! Here this distant act of Saul's is remembered. And a sort of service which one would fancy would follow with soothing influence the spirit of the dead, is the beautiful fruit of their grateful recollection. Nor is this the only fruit ; for you will observe that, in the subsequent history, the house of Saul has nowhere more devoted adherents than the inhabitants of Gilead. Do not fear your good will ever be unrequited. Say neither to God nor man, “Thou art a hard master, and therefore I bury my talent in the earth ;” for the world is froward to the froward, honourable to the honourable, grateful to the

good ; a sort of mirror, in which we find the face we bring to it. With this difference, however, that God working on the side of all that is good, the reward of any goodness is always vastly larger than the retribution of any ill. Covet the beautiful rewards of kindness. Scores of years after they have been rendered they will return with a blessing into your bosom.

III. A DEED OF HONOUR ALWAYS BEARS SOME FRUITS OF GRAND ADVANTAGE. Judas thought there was no reply possible to his question of cynical utilitarianism. And some like him in Jabesh doubtless asked, *Cui bono?* and protested that the project was rash ; that the dead were not bettered by any attentions shown them ; that they should rather look after the substantial advantages of their wives and families than risk their lives in sentimental expeditions. But if some argued thus, the event might convince even such that the project was not quite so unwise as it seemed. What were the results ? They were at least these. 1. *An increase of their own self-respect.* Self-respect is as valuable as self-esteem is weakening. It is a force daily lifting men higher in purpose and in action, a restraint on what is unworthy, a stimulus to all that is good. These people had approval of their own hearts. Their act saved them from self-contempt ; set a pattern for them which they would copy and excel. Never lower yourself in your own esteem, nor do that for which you will have to excuse yourself to yourself. Your deeds of honour will raise your self-respect, and by doing so will raise your whole future character. 2. It had another result in the *good esteem in which all Israel held them.* All the tribes honoured them for their faithfulness ; David solemnly blessed them for their nobility ; a kindly reverence moved all hearts towards them, and an enduring fame. Even the Judases can appreciate such an advantage, only they stickle always at the way that leads to it, because the fame cannot be guaranteed beforehand. We are members one of another. So act that the esteem of your fellows shall be yours. Only second to God's approval is that of your fellow-men. 3. This act inspired Israel with *fresh power to resist the Philistines.* The spirit and success of this act took the gilding off the great victory ; made the Philistines feel that the end was not quite so absolute as they had thought. The inspiration of the noble deed crept into innumerable hearts ; invigorated and nerfed them for the task of undoing the mischief wrought ; permitted the feeble to breathe more freely, and the brave to make their plans for further struggle. Such are some—not by any means all—of the services of this deed of honour. Are they not very high and noble ? "Go and do thou likewise." In your action towards your Saviour, do all that honour bids you ; and in your action towards your fellow-men, let honour rather than advantage be the principle of all your actions.—G.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The danger of spiritualism.* "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it ; and inquired not of the Lord." Consider not the many and grievous faults of Saul, but one, and that his last. In modern language, the witch of Endor was a "medium," and Saul's act simply one of those acts of consulting the dead which many believe to be at once practicable and proper. It is not part of my province to defend what some deem the severity of the Mosaic laws against all manner of witchcraft in all its forms. I only remark that a defence of the law which inflicted death upon such might be made by men of tenderest charity ; that such would only need to indicate the universal tendency of magic to become "the black art"—a means of revenge, prolific in murder and in crime—to justify the severest measures necessary to repress it. It is easy for the sorcerer to destroy, difficult for him to save life. So in all ages and lands, from the astrologers of Europe, in the Middle Ages, down to the Obea-men of the West Indies to-day, the sorcerers have been the instruments of revenge at once ready to commit and able to conceal the greatest crimes. Even the English law, with its nineteenth-century indifferentism, finds it necessary to punish the common and vulgar forms of fortune-telling. I prefer to take not the forensic but the personal side of this question ; and to deal with it, not in its darker phases, in which it would appear as a superstition, enslaving the mind, tempting to by offering facilities for crime, investing life with awful horrors, but rather in the lighter form, in which it seems harmless, in which a few years ago in this country and America

it was somewhat fashionable, in which it might even seem to be a means of grace, furnishing some proof of the existence of the soul after death to a gainsaying and materialistic age. I would make two or three preliminary observations. 1. That in the nature of things one would expect a great deal of deception to be practised in connection with spiritualism. Even if a large substratum of fact is in it, yet there will always be a temptation to guess when the oracle provokes by its silence—a reluctance to be caught at a loss; and the tendency to eke out the oracles by guesses will be all the greater when (as usually happens) it would be impossible to convict immediately of error. 2. That we are at a loss in this matter from not knowing exactly how many senses we have. To the five commonly recognized, one has been added—a sense of heat and cold. But probably we have a great many more senses than six: powers of perception, too subtle to be tabulated, but, in some natures of fine sensibility, quite strong enough to perceive by direct and natural but subtle apprehension what lies outside of the knowledge of the five homely senses that are merely the strong, rough ones, common to us all. 3. That whatever be the explanation (and probably a simple scientific one is possible), the existence and practices of clairvoyants in every age and country, and the record of undoubted wonders done by them, make it almost impossible to doubt that some persons in some circumstances can perceive more than comes within the range of ordinary perception. From Apollonius of Tyana down to Swedenborg; from the Delphic oracle, which told what Croesus was doing on a certain day, several hundreds of miles away, to the instances of second sight still at least supposed to exist in the Scottish Highlands,—you get strange facts, too numerous to be met by a universal denial, for which we should, if possible, find some explanation consistent with natural science. But the more of truth there is in the claim of power to reveal the distant or the future, the less, in my judgment, will any wise man have to do with such practices. I therefore urge on many grounds the danger and wrong of spiritualism. Perhaps the following heads may sum up what is material on this matter:—

I. **WE DO NOT NEED ANY SUPERNATURAL HELP BEYOND THAT OF GOD.** For ordinary life the ordinary senses and faculties of man suffice. For all work it is a mistake if the tool be too fine, as well as if it is too coarse. Finer faculties than we have would be too fine for the work of life; would be a source, not of strength, but only of pain and torment. That knowledge of the unseen and future, which we always crave for, would have been given us had it been good for us. But God has concluded that, as regards the unknowable, faith is better than sight, and, as regards the future, hope is better than foreknowledge. For common life, common sense is requisite and is sufficient, especially as we all have within reach aids of grace and enlightenment, that will make our steps safe, if it do not altogether satisfy our curiosity. If we pray to God for guidance, he will answer that prayer, not in some strange and supernatural way, but by calming our over-anxiety, by fortifying our judgment, by presenting in clear light the determining considerations which should weigh with us, by restraining the temptation that might mislead us, by ordering our circumstances so that the only open path is the path of wisdom and of duty. More than this no one needs, and the imagination that the knowledge of the concealed would benefit us is misleading and worrying. Beyond that of God we need no supernatural help or light.

II. **SUCH LIGHT IS USELESS AS WELL.** There are some things not essential but still soothing, comforting, and helpful. But the knowledge of the concealed is not only not essential—it is useless in any shape in which it can come to us. And that for one reason—*It is never capable of being verified.* You are at the mercy of any “tricksy sprite” that likes to play with your solicitude. If ghosts are free to report themselves, any one of them could simulate Samuel, and, instead of the sober oracle you expect, could give you something with just that shade of error in it that would make it fatally seductive. You cannot apply rule-and-compass argument or faculty to the verification of the message. You must “trust them all or not at all.” You cannot prove the spirits in any of the matters on which you seek their light. I say therefore it is valueless. Such oracles are unsigned cheques, which you cannot treat as money. Seeking to escape from the painful necessity of relying on your own judgment, you (like Roman Catholics) have still to rely on your private judgment on the most momentous question of the whole, viz. whether they are worthy to be your guides. Therefore “pick no locks;” be content to be in the dark where God has left you in the dark. It

will be safer for you to travel the unknown road by God's moonlight or starlight, than to have a blazing gleam thrown round you, which comes you know not whence and leads you know not whither.

III. THERE IS MANIFOLD INJURY IN HAVING RE COURSE TO SUCH. 1. *There is injury to the body.* There are few whose nervous systems can stand either real or imaginary communion with the unseen world. Converse with fellow men and women has no exciting element; but spirits either find or leave the nerves unstrung. Fancy takes reason's throne. Man lives in two worlds, instead of in one bright with the presence of God and man. There can hardly be enjoyment of the friendship without solicitude as to the enmity of the spirits; so that calmness of nerve and that fine physical health which furthers all good growth is *generally* seriously impaired. 2. *There is injury to the mind.* The proper self-reliance which dignifies and develops man is interfered with by this reference of all things to a mysterious oracle. The faculties grow strong by being trusted. Judgment inspired and brightened by God, the more it is used the more it grows. Subordinate it to mysterious oracles, and the whole mental energy deteriorates and slackens. Above all: 3. *The soul suffers.* We cannot well have two guides—two oracles. We can leave God, and be guided by the dubious light which mediums may find for us; or we may leave them, and take God's light and God's darkness as he sees fit to give it; but we cannot very well have both. Even the devoutest we imagine will find the simplicity of their dependence on God somewhat impaired by resorting to other guides; and their simple acceptance of the Saviour's teaching impaired by their sitting at the feet of those whose suggestions do not always concur with his. So the writer speaks of Saul's act as of a backsliding, pointing the despair into which he had sunk. Keep your heart free of all that enfeebles it and of all that divides it from the Lord. Poor Saul got nothing but a deeper despair that drove him to his doom. Take Isaiah's exhortation, therefore, to the spiritualists of his day: "When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, . . . should not a people seek unto their God?" (Isa. viii. 19).—G.

Vers. 2, 14.—*Saul and David.* The portion of the Book of Chronicles referring more particularly to the genealogy of Israel ends with the thirty-fourth verse of the ninth chapter. With the following verse commences the real history of the people. The history of a nation is the history of its head or king; and we commence that history with the history of Saul and David. They both appear on the scene in the following verses. We must not forget, in reading this history, that these two personages are representative characters. They are eminently typical. In Saul we must not omit to see the head of the great world-power, or that which is antagonistic to the kingdom of the Son of God. In David, likewise, we must see One greater than David, even the true David, the Lord Jesus Christ. Saul and David are from beginning to end in opposition. Saul's history comes *first*. He is the people's choice, the man of the world. His entire course is enmity against David. Hatred, opposition, and bitter persecution are the results of this enmity. The end of the world-power, as represented in him, is defeat and failure, ruin and death. Thus will this world's rule end also. Nevertheless, all this opposition and enmity are most needful to David and his few faithful followers. It disciplined and trained him for the kingdom for which he had been anointed of God. So this world's misrule and enmity are most needful for the Lord's anointed ones. David and his followers under Saul were strangers and pilgrims indeed. So Christ and his people are now. But their time is at hand when the weeds of sorrow shall be exchanged for the laurels of victory. I said Saul's history comes *first*. It is always *so*. Whether in the history of individuals or nations, whether in nature or in grace, in *everything* the dark background comes *first*, and then the lines of the picture of grace can be seen. The tenth chapter of this book is man at his best estate. It is the dark background. *One chapter* is enough for *it*. The eleventh chapter begins with the God-man, David, who is the type in it of a "Greater than David." It goes on unfolding chapter after chapter. It has not ended yet, for in the history of David's Son—the Lord Jesus Christ—it is still going on. The chapters are still unfolding him, and will throughout eternity, for he is "the everlasting God," the "I am that I am," "which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."—W.

Ver. 4.—Saul's character. Saul was not an atheist. He was a religious man in his way. This chapter shows it. Saul calls the Philistines the “uncircumcised ones.” Circumcision distinguished *him*, and he evidently prided himself on it. It had placed him on a pedestal so that he could look on all others and exclaim, “Stand aside; for I am holier than thou.” Thus he had the “*form* of godliness;” but where was the “*power*”? Was there one iota of what circumcision was intended to represent about him? None. He rested in the ordinance. The meaning of that ordinance had in him no adequate expression. Are there not many now who pride themselves on baptism? But what has baptism in them in its true meaning? Are they dead and buried with Christ? Are they risen with Christ? Are they alive unto God and dead indeed unto sin? Where is the crucifixion of *them* to the *world* and the *world* unto *them*, which baptism signifies? Alas! they have none of it. They may look with disdain upon the “unbaptized” ones, as Saul did upon the “uncircumcised” ones; but well would it have been for him, and well would it be for them also, if they had never had it.—W.

Ver. 13.—Saul's sin. What was Saul's sin for which he was slain? He followed God just so far as suited his convenience; when it interfered in any way with his own interests he cast him off. He destroyed the Amalekites—so far he obeyed God's word, because he had no interest in doing otherwise; but he saved Agag and part of the cattle and the *chief* things of the Amalekites, because they were of advantage to himself. This is the sin of this day. We serve God so far as it does not interfere with personal advantage, present or future; but when God comes in and demands a full surrender at any cost, we cast him off. Self-interest and advantage are our god in reality, though it may be very convenient to us, and even help us to the attainment of our ends, to acknowledge Jesus Christ. But Saul committed a twofold sin against God. He sought in a time of perplexity to know God's will. The Lord was silent. He was left in darkness. Probably it was only in form that he sought God. God had given his will in the matter of Agag, and he had refused to act upon it. If we go deliberately against God's will in any matter, we must expect God to be silent. It is the punishment for our sin. Instead of repenting and again seeking God, he had recourse to a witch. This was forbidden by the Law, and Saul knew it. It mattered not. It was for his advantage; and Saul, true to his character, cared little for the law or anything else when it stood in his way. Nay, worse than all, he had put down necromancy. He had issued penalties of death upon it, and now he is actually seeking it himself! What tremendous inconsistency! Ah, but Saul would do as *King of Israel* what he would not do as an *individual*. He could carry out God's will when it did not interfere with himself in any way; but when it did, he would trample it under his feet. It is the picture of thousands.—W.

Vers. 13, 14.—Saul's death. As we look at the account of Saul's death (vers. 2—4), how natural it seems—just in the ordinary course of battle! No eye looking at it could put any other interpretation upon it. But mark the Divine testimony—“God slew him.” The battle and the archers and all the second causes are simply but the drapery behind which the Divine hand was carrying out its purposes of removing Saul to set up David. Thus must we look at everything that passes before the eye. It is the province of faith to look behind all the drapery and see the Divine hand. To this moral elevation none can reach but they who are habitually in communion with God. Not the “archers,” not the armour-bearer's “sword”—not these, but “God slew him,” and “turned the kingdom unto David.” And observe the identification of the Lord's word here with the Lord *himself*. To sin against the Word is the same as to sin against God. So it is said of Jonah when he disobeyed the Lord's *Word*, “he rose up to flee from the *presence of the Lord*.” Let us ever learn that the Lord's Word is God himself, and the despite done to one is done to the other.—W.

Ver. 2.—Innocent sharing in calamity. The judgment that came upon King Saul could not be limited to *him*; it included his sons, his family, his dynasty. Saul's sin was distinctly *personal*. He committed acts of wilfulness; he failed in the completeness of his obedience (1 Sam. xiii. 8—14; xv. 8, 9). And yet his sin could not be personal only—no man can secure that his sin shall be, while he comes into relations

with others. Saul's sin must also be *official*—the iniquity of the representative person, the *king*; and *relational*—the iniquity of the *father*, the head of a family. So far as a man's sin starts a train of consequences, he cannot limit the disabilities to his own suffering, and he may not wonder if the resultant calamities should strike him through the suffering of those most dear to him. To our feeling the exceeding bitterness of the consequences of wilful sin lies in the fact of their involving others, and those whom we would most anxiously spare.

I. **THE INNOCENT DO NOT SHARE IN THE GUILT.** Distinguish between the *guilt* and the *calamity* that follows on it. The guilt can rest only on the man who does the wilful and guilty act, because an action is only guilty action when it is wilfully done against light and knowledge. So, depending on the *will*, it belongs exclusively to the *individual*. King Saul was guilty before God, but his sons were not, save as they may have personally accepted and approved their father's acts, and so made themselves individually responsible. This way of becoming sharers in guilt is taught by St. Paul in Rom. i. 22. He comes under the Divine judgment who *has pleasure* in them that do evil things, as well as those who actually *do* the evil.

II. **THE INNOCENT MAY SHARE IN THE CALAMITY THAT FOLLOWS ON SIN.** This may be illustrated from the family sphere—a father's wrong-doing breaks up the home, etc.; or from the social spheres—neglect of sanitary laws on the part of local governments involve the innocent citizens in disease and plague; or from the national spheres—a king's wrong-doing brings war, and battle and siege are calamities for women and children as well as for soldiers.

III. **THE INNOCENT MUST SHARE IN THE CALAMITY THAT FOLLOWS ON SIN.** For this is precisely the condition under which God has set mankind. It follows, of necessity, upon that fact of the "solidarity of the race," which modern writers are now setting in prominence, but which St. Paul taught as one of the basis-principles of Christianity long years ago. See his speech at Athens and the Epistle to the Romans. Illustrate by the figure of "many members in one body." One limb or organ, diseased, gives pain and weakness in other organs that are not diseased. Men are, in actual life, as vitally related as parts of the body, and if one member sins the other members suffer with it.

IV. **THE INNOCENT SHARING IN CALAMITY HAS A MORAL MISSION.** It is one of *warning*. We only feel the real evil of sin through the pressure of the troubles that follow upon it. But it becomes an effective warning that we must drag *others* down with our sin; and we can never be sure who will be the chief sufferer—it may possibly be our dearest and best.

V. **THE INNOCENT SHARING IN CALAMITY HAS A RECOVERING AND REDEMPTIVE POWER.** It awakens to a sense of sin, recovering us from the delusions of self-will. It binds men together in a brotherhood of helpfulness; seeking to relieve from burdens of suffering, they are led to see that suffering must be dealt with at its root, which is *sin*.

Lead up to the fact of the Lord Jesus Christ, the *innocent* member of the human race, the spotless and perfectly obedient Son of God, suffering *in, with, and for* a guilty world. It is precisely this which is the fullest and most effective revelation of the guilt of mankind. Yet it is precisely this which is the great recovering and redemptive power. "He was wounded for our transgressions," and "by his stripes we are healed."—R. T.

Vers. 3-6, 13.—*The end of self-will.* In dwelling on the sad circumstances of King Saul's death, we are led to review the life which ended so miserably, and to endeavour to find the *root of evil*, in disposition or in conduct, which bore at last such fruitage. The actual incidents of Saul's career should be recalled.

I. **THE HOPEFULNESS OF HIS INTRODUCTION TO US.** In his expedition to seek the lost asses, in his anointing at Ramah, in his election by lot at Mizpeh, in the confirmation of his kingship at Gilgal, and in the first actions of his government, there are the signs of a hopeful reign. Especially may be noted and illustrated his *modesty*—in shrinking from the responsibility of kingship; his *loyalty to duty*—where the will of God and the people was made plain to him; his *openness to religious influences*—as seen in his catching the prophetic impulse; and his *generosity*—shown in refusing to take vengeance on those who disputed his authority. Many a man has begun well. No

man knows himself until he has borne the stress of *middle life*, and its responsibilities, testings, and temptations.

II. THE PERIL OF THE OVER-DEVELOPED BODY. For this he was chosen and admired; in accordance with the admiration of physical *size* and *strength* which is common to all people who retain *tribal notions*. But there is also the peril of the bodily growth being stronger than the *mental*, and the overgrowth of body often involves *moral weakness*. And these may find expression in a stubbornness of self-will, which, by indulgence, may become *mania*. The self-will of moral weakness should be carefully distinguished from the self-reliance, power of rule, and masterfulness, which are as clearly the signs of mental and moral strength.

III. THE TEST OF THE NEW TRUST OF KINGSHIP. The office was quite a new one; the only previous instance was the forced kingship of Abimelech. Saul had really no *model* on which to order his conduct. Exactly what kingship could be in a country where Jehovah himself was the sole sovereign Lord, he had to find out. So that, beyond the ordinary testings of any new and untried situations, Saul was tried by the uniqueness of the position in which he was placed. Exactly the point at which he might fail was this—he might *practically* claim independence for an office which was nevertheless strictly a conditioned and a dependent office. He could be Jehovah's prince and viceroy; he would be tempted to claim personal and independent kingly rights. So the trust of the office *tested his will*, proved whether he was fully and sincerely loyal to God. This piece of Saul's life brought him into the conflict of the *seen* and the *unseen*, which every man must enter. Would he, even with all the fascinations and interest of the "seen," be true to God, the unseen? Would he be strictly and wholly obedient to the Divine commands and the Divine leadings? Not character only, but the very root-principle of Saul's being, was tested. Compare the searching tests of Abraham's faith and Job's patient submission. Saul failed under the testing; so we have to consider—

IV. THE CONDITIONS OF THE GROWTH OF SELF-WILL. Apparent success in the earlier efforts of willfulness encourages the self-confidence. But, in view of Saul's case, we may especially dwell on the influence of rejecting early Divine warnings, and refusing to be humbled under reproofs of earlier sins and failures. This involves the *hardening* of the heart, as may be illustrated in the case of Pharaoh.

V. SELF-WILL, IN THE END, BRINGS BOTH SELF AND OTHERS TO RUIN. It can never have more than a certain length of *tether*. No man can long "resist God and prosper." Saul's later days fully illustrate the *inward miseries* and *outward ruin* of self-will; the "death" which this sin, "when it is finished, surely brings forth." Distinguish between the *self-strength* which God may use, and the *self-will* which severs a man wholly from God. Whatever may be our station or our office, there is one condition of success, and only one—we must "fear God, and keep his commandments."—R. T.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The time for returning kindness is sure to come.* Recall the deliverance which, very early in his kingship, Saul had wrought for the men of Jabesh-gilead (1 Sam. xi.). It seemed most unlikely that those rescued citizens would ever be able to do anything for Saul which would publicly testify their gratitude; and yet time passed on, and presently brought them their golden opportunity. When the stripped and dismembered bodies of Saul and his sons hung in front of the gates of Beth-shan, the men of Jabesh-gilead felt they could at least stop such dishonouring of the dead; so they made a sudden foray in the dead of night, seized the bodies, gave them honourable burning, and burial under a tree (1 Sam. xxxi. 11—13). We may learn from this incident that—

I. WE CAN HELP OTHERS IN THEIR EXTREMITIES. For precisely this we are knit together in the human brotherhood; and there are no possible forms of human need and trouble for which there are not *human alleviations*; and these are at our command.

II. QUICKNESS TO HELP OTHERS IS CHARACTERISTICALLY CHRISTIAN. Sensitiveness to human suffering, and sense of personal responsibility in relation to its relief, are necessary features of Christian character, and essential elements of true Christ-likeness. "Himself bare our infirmities and carried our sorrows." We are to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

III. MEMORY OF HELP RECEIVED SHOULD BE LOVINGLY CHERISHED. Ingratitude is

a sin of peculiar baseness. There may be long delay ere gratitude can find its opportunity, but it should be well nourished and kept for its occasion.

IV. TIME BRINGS ROUND THE OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL WHO KEEP THE WILL. Illustrate from incident of text, and from the care of our parents. We seem unable to show our gratitude for the hallowing care of our childhood; but their helpless old age comes, and we get our opportunity. Lead on to that sense of indebtedness we should feel to Christ for his redeeming work; and to the duty of keeping ever watchful of opportunities for serving him—as we may do, by serving some of the least of his brethren. See McCheyne's hymn, "When this passing world is done," etc.—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*Judgments come through men, but they are from the Lord.* This topic is suggested by the expression, "Therefore he slew him." This passage gives the reason for the death of Saul, as viewed from a later standpoint; a moral is pointed from it that might serve as a warning to the returned captives of Babylon. Saul came under judgment, and we must see that it was *Divine* judgment. It may be well to form a careful estimate of Saul's character and reign, so that the Divine dealings with him may be worthily apprehended. "It is impossible not to recognize elements of good in him. David's lament does but express the national admiration for one, who, in his best days, must have been both prudent in counsel and mighty in war. We cannot fail to see the evil taint of self-will making sinister marks across the entire record and utterly darkening the closing chapters." There is little but warning to be gathered from the story of King Saul; but we should receive those warnings humbly, for "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

I. GOD'S JUDGMENTS FIND EARTHLY SPHERES. One of the great objects for the sake of which the Old Testament histories are preserved to us is to convince us that God visits sins now, and lets his judgments be executed here on earth. Judgment, in Saul's case, came on a battle-field; it may come on a sick-bed or a ruined home. Our tendency is to call earthly troubles accidents, and to shift the idea of Divine judgment into the world that is to come. We think that God will judge, condemn, and execute his judgments *there*, and so we too easily separate him from the calamities of our life. It is to be impressively apprehended that Saul had his judgment *in this sphere*. No man can be sure of postponing the Divine judgment to the next life. Whosoever "transgresseth" lies under this exceeding peril; the Divine indignation is over him now, and he has no security as to *how* or *when* it will fall.

II. GOD'S JUDGMENTS FIND HUMAN AGENTS. This needs to be set forth so as to correct a common fallacy and self-deception. Men may be willing to admit that fire and tempest, famine and pestilence, are executive agents of God, and work out his judgments, but they are less willing to see that their fellow-men, even in doing wrong, may be used by God as his executioners. Even the Philistines, in their violence and wilfulness, became the executors of the Divine wrath on Saul. See how much larger and more comprehensive a view of the Divine administration this gives; and it may afford some very humbling revelations of some misunderstood passages of our lives. Maybe we thought ourselves only *wronged by men*; through the wrong we were punished by God.

III. THE EARTHLY AND THE HUMAN JUDGMENTS MUST NOT HIDE THE DIVINE IN THEM. As we see things, the Philistines defeated Saul and he ultimately slew himself. But we must not thus obscure the Divine. The deeper truth is that *God slew him*. So of the incidents of our lives; nothing should hide the Divine meaning of them.

IV. THE EARTHLY AND THE HUMAN SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO CONFUSE OUR VIEWS OF THE FUTURE AND ETERNAL JUDGMENT. No judgment, limited to the earthly spheres, can be properly said to exhaust the Divine sentence. God wants the next life for the adequate vindications of his righteousness. The fact of a man's having suffered in this life gives him no security against judgment to come.

V. THE EARTHLY AND THE HUMAN FIND THEIR COMPLETE MISSION, NOT IN THE SUFFERER, BUT IN THE WARNING OF THOSE WHO MAY HEAR OF THE JUDGMENT. This is illustrated in the preservation of the records of the Flood, the destruction of Sodom, the ruin of Balaam, the miserable end of Saul, etc. Deal with our Lord's teachings concerning "calamity." Distinguish "calamity" from "judgment." We call a thing a judgment when we can connect together—as in Saul's case—the sin and

the suffering. Otherwise we say, "It is a calamity, and it *may be a judgment*." Plead for a real and practical belief in God's present rule, and solemn vindications of his will and authority, both in national and individual spheres.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1.—Upon the death of Saul, Abner, for a while espousing the cause of Ishboseth, the only surviving son of Saul, "made him king over" a large proportion of the people, exclusive of Judah (2 Sam. ii. 8-10). Already David had been anointed at Hebron by "the men of Judah, king over the house of Judah" (2 Sam. ii. 1-4). And David continued "king in Hebron over the house of Judah seven years and six months" (2 Sam. ii. 11; v. 5; 1 Kings ii. 11; ch. iii. 4). Notice the agreement of this date with the account of the six sons born to David in Hebron (2 Sam. iii. 2-5). The explanation of the chronology for Ishboseth affecting this period is not easy. It is said that he reigned over Israel "two years" (2 Sam. ii. 10). Where was the difference of five and a half years lost? Our first verse here, with its apparently emphatic them (comp. 2 Sam. v. 1), would seem to make it very unlikely that it was lost between the death of Ishboseth and the kingship of David over "all the tribes of Israel" together with Judah. On the other hand, the interval in question might find its account in the "long war" (2 Sam. iii. 1, 6, 17-21) between the house of Saul and the house of David." There is, however, still possible the supposition that the historian intends to give the intrinsically correct facts of the case, and means that, what with delay before getting the adhesion of the people to Ishboseth, and what with the early decay of his sovereign power, he could not be said to have reigned more than two years. This verse, then, shows that the history proper of Chronicles purports to begin from the time of David's rule over the entire and united people, at the exact date of seven and a half years after Saul's death, while no mention is here made of his intermediate partial rule over Judah, or of Ishboseth's temporary rule over Benjamin and Israel. All Israel; i.e. "all the tribes of Israel" (2 Sam. v. 1), by their representatives, "the elders of Israel" (2 Sam. iii. 17; v. 3; as well as our ver. 3). The first nine verses of this chapter cover the same ground as the first ten verses of 2 Sam. v. Unto Hebron. We learn how David came to be here from 2 Sam. ii. 1. "And it came to pass after this" (i.e. after David's "lamentation over Saul and Jonathan")

"that David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the Lord said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron." Hebron was the "earliest seat of civilized life, not of Judah only, but of all Palestine." It and Bethlehem are two of the most special memorials of David. An interesting sketch of the topography and natural features of this place, and a succinct Biblical history of it in Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' p. 164 (edit. 1866), from which comes the following quotation:—"Hebron, according to the Jewish tradition, was the primeval city of the vine. Its name indicates *community* or *society*. It was the ancient city of Ephron the Hittite, in whose gate he and the elders received the offer of Abraham, when as yet no other fixed habitation of man was known in central Palestine. It was the first home of Abraham and the patriarchs; their own permanent resting-place when they were gradually exchanging the pastoral for the agricultural life. In its neighbourhood can be traced, by a continuous tradition, the site of the venerable tree under which Abraham pitched his tent, and of the double cavern in which he and his family were deposited and perhaps still remain. It was the city of Arba, the old Canaanite chief, with his three giant sons, under whose walls the trembling spies stole through the land by the adjacent valley of Eshcol. Here Caleb chose his portion when, at the head of his valiant tribe, he drove out the old inhabitants, and called the whole surrounding territory after his own name; and here the tribe of Judah always rallied, when it asserted its independent existence against the rest of the Israelite nation. It needs but few words to give the secret of this early selection, of this long continuance of the metropolitan city of Judah. Every traveller from the desert must have been struck by the sight of that pleasant vale, with its orchards and vineyards and numberless wells, and we must add, in earlier times, the groves of terebinths and oaks which then attracted from far the eye of the wandering tribes. This fertility was in part owing to its elevation into the cooler and the more watered region above the dry and withered valleys of the rest of Judea—and commanding this fertile valley, rose Hebron, on its *crested hill*." Behold, we

are thy bone and thy flesh. This is a figurative expression, the pedigree and lineage of which it is interesting to note (see 2 Sam. xix. 12; Judg. ix. 2; Gen. xxix. 14; ii. 23). The highest service to which it was promoted may be said to be reached, however, in Eph. v. 30.

Ver. 2.—Thou shalt feed my people Israel (so 2 Sam. v. 2; vii. 7; Ps. lxxviii. 71). Thus to the servant is condescendingly vouchsafed the same description as the Master takes through the Spirit for himself—to the under-shepherd the same as the Chief Shepherd acknowledges; note same psalm, ver. 72; Ps. xxiii. 1—4; c. 3; 1 Pet. v. 4.

Ver. 3.—Made a covenant . . . before the Lord. A forcible use of this phrase occurs in Judg. xi. 11. It implies that the engagement was ratified in the presence of a holy place, a holy vessel of the sanctuary, or a holy person (1 Sam. xxi. 6, 7; Josh. xviii. 8; Lev. i. 5). Whether the tabernacle was now at Hebron is doubtful, but the two priests, Abiathar and Zadok, were. They anointed David. The first time of David's being anointed (1 Sam. xvi. 1, 13) Samuel the prophet officiated. The second time (2 Sam. ii. 4) was when the "men of Judah" anointed him king over "the house of Judah." This third time when David was anointed king over the united people, it was at all events at the special instance of "all the elders of Israel," although who officiated on these two last occasions is not mentioned. According to the word of the Lord by Samuel. The sentence marks the complete fulfilment of what had been foreshadowed in 1 Sam. xvi. 12, 13; and it may probably have been the more carefully introduced by the compiler of Chronicles, in consideration of the absence from his own work of previous details and of the previous anointings of David.

Ver. 4.—Jerusalem, which is Jebus. This ancient name of Jerusalem, of Canaanitish date, is found only once beside, viz. in Judg. xix. 10, 11; the Gentile form of the noun, however, Jebusi, is of more frequent occurrence, and sometimes it is found even as the name of the city (Josh. xv. 8, 63; xviii. 16, 28). The derivation and meaning of the word are unascertained. Gesenius explains it to mean "a place dry or down-trodden like a threshing-floor."

Ver. 5.—Thou shalt not come hither. The inhabitants of Jebus added something beside (2 Sam. v. 6). They had said, "Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither." The castle of Zion. This fort became the site of the temple. It is the *Acre* of Josephus, and is different from the modern Zion. It

was the eastern hill in the city, was the second highest elevation in the city, and up to the time of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem was uniformly named Zion, though from the time of Constantine it has been used for the name of the western hill, the site of *Jerusalem*. There is but little doubt of the identity of the hill of Moriah with the hill of Zion, though no individual passage of Scripture asserts it. The passage before us, however, with its parallel, tells us plainly enough that the city of David, and that which became the sacred hill of Zion are one; and many passages in the Psalms and the prophets both confirm this and point out the difference between Zion and Jerusalem.

Ver. 6.—The name and fresh glory of Joab, as given here, are not given in 2 Sam. v. 3—10; and we could suppose that they were purposely withheld there. It is true that Joab already held high office, probably the first place as captain of David's men, but Bertheau's objection to the statement of this verse on such grounds easily yields to the considerations—first, that there can be no doubt Joab had fallen into disfavour with David and others, upon his slaying of Abner (2 Sam. iii. 26—29, 36, 37); and further, that this was a great occasion, exceedingly favourable for evoking any very special ability of younger or unknown men, at present lost under the shadow of larger growths. The advantage which Joab gained now was one that confirmed his position and increased largely his influence; and an indication that he was not slow to avail himself of it is probably to be traced in the eighth verse, where it is said while "David built . . . even from Millo round about, . . . Joab repaired the rest of the city."

Ver. 8.—Millo. There is great uncertainty as to the derivation and the meaning of this word. It is probably not really of Hebrew extraction, but of the oldest Canaanitish origin. In the Hebrew it is always used with the article, and would presumably come from the Hebrew root "to fill." Josephus seems to use, as synonymous expression for "David's wall round Millo," this, viz. "buildings round about the lower city" (Jud. Ant., iii. 2 compared with 5; 'Wars,' vi. 1, where he identifies those "buildings," etc., with *Acre*). As the name of a family, it is mentioned in connection with Silechem, known specially as a place of the Canaanites (Judg. ix. 6, 20). The Septuagint represents it by the word ἡ ἀκρα. In the remarkable passage, 2 Kings xii. 20, the word "Silla" is even a greater enigma, which, however, may designate the "steps from the city of David" (Neh. iii. 15), or "the causeway of

going up" to the west of the temple (ch. xxii. 16). The likeliest view of Millo is that it was a very strong point of fortification in the surrounding defences of the hill of Zion (1 Kings ix. 24; xi. 27). In 2 Chron. xxxii. 5 the otherwise unvarying translation (*ἡ ἀκρα*) of the Septuagint is superseded by *τὸν ἀνδλημα*, a word itself of doubtful signification. For while some would render it by the word "foundation," Schleusner translates it "height." Grove (in Smith's "Bible Dictionary," ii. 367) puts it in "the neighbourhood of the Tyropean valley at the foot of Zion." Some clue may lie in the word "inward," applied to the building by David. Does it imply a covering by edifices of the space, or some portion of it, that lay between Zion and the rest of the city? (See also Keil on Kings, vol. ii. 163.)

Vers. 10—25.—This list of chiefs of David's "mighty men" finds a more appropriate position where it is placed here, than where it is found, after the close of the very dying speech of David, in 2 Sam. xxiii. 8—23. It plainly belongs to the time of the establishment of David's sway over the whole people. The different position of the list here is itself an indication of some force, that the writers of the work of Samuel and of Chronicles availed themselves independently of the common source, and that the latter did not take through the former.

Ver. 11.—This is the number. The Hebrew has, "These are the number." The sentence should probably be, "These are the names" (2 Sam. xxiii. 8). Jashobeam. In the parallel passage, this name is supplied by the words "The Tachmonite, *תָּחוּמִי*, Authorized Version, "that sat in the seat" (see the previous verse), probably in error for our *כָּבֵשׂ* (see Kennicott's "Dissert.," 82). His immediate paternal ancestor seems to have been Zabdiel (ch. xxvii. 2). The only other notices of him are in ch. xii. 6; xxvii. 2, in which latter passage he is mentioned as "over the first course for the first month, . . . and in his course were twenty and four thousand." The chief of the captains. The Authorized Version follows the Keri (which is distinguished from the Chethiv by a *yod* in place of a *rau*), and translates *captains*. It seems better (vers. 15, 25; ch. xii. 4, 18; xxvii. 6) to abide by the Chethiv, and translate "the chief of the *thirty*." He lifted up his spear. Notice the probable error in Samuel, occasioned by some similarity in the Hebrew letters, "The same was Adino the Eznite." The number of Jashobeam's victims is stated at "eight hundred" in the parallel passage (2 Sam. xxiii. 8). (For analogous idioms, see Exod. vii. 20; xx. 25; Deut. xxvii. 5;

Josh. viii. 31; Ps. xli. 9; lxxiv. 5; Isa. ii. 4; Ezek. xxvi. 28.)

Ver. 12.—Eleazar. Perhaps the same as Azareel in the list at ch. xii. 6, in which Jashobeam is also found. Dodo. This name is found in three forms, the Chethiv being Dodi; the Keri, Dodo; and Dodai being found in ch. xxvii. 4. He is mentioned in ch. xxvii. 4 as "over the course of the second month . . . in his course likewise twenty and four thousand." The Ahohite. In the parallel passage (2 Sam. xxiii. 9), for *אֲהוֹהִי* here, we find *אֲהוֹהִי*. Ahohite is the patronymic of the Ahoah, who (ch. viii. 4) was given among the sons of Bela, the firstborn of Benjamin. The three mighty. Who is the third? We have here but two—Jashobeam and Eleazar. The parallel passage supplies the omission by the name of Shammah the Hararite (2 Sam. xxiii. 11, 33; comp. our ver. 27). And a careful comparison of the passages suggests how the omission came about, and that it was but part of a larger omission. Between the sentences, "and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle," and "where was a parcel of ground full of barley" (in our next verse, 13) there is an hiatus of two verses (viz. those found in 2 Sam. xxiii. as latter half of ver. 9, ver. 10, and former half of ver. 11), and this hiatus was occasioned probably by the recurrence of the expression, "and the Philistines were gathered together," in the remaining half of ver. 11 (see Kennicott's Bible, and "Speaker's Commentary," in loc.).

Ver. 13.—Pas-dammim. This word, *פָּסְדָּמִים*, appears in 1 Sam. xvii. 1 as *פָּסְדָּם*, and is supposed to mean, in either form, "the boundary of blood;" it was the scene of frequent conflicts with the Philistines, and was the spot where they were encamped at the time of Goliath's challenge to Israel. It was near Shoco, or Socoh, in Judah, some fourteen miles south-west of Jerusalem. Full of barley. The Authorized Version reading in the parallel passage (2 Sam. xxiii. 11) is "full of lentiles," the Hebrew for "barley" is *כְּרִיעָה*, for "lentiles" *כְּרִיעָה*. Possibly the words should be the same, one being here spelt, by accident, wrongly for the other (so Kennicott). The first Bible mention of "barley" occurs in Exod. ix. 31, 32, from which verses we learn that it, together with "flax," was an earlier crop than "rye" and "wheat." It was not only used for food for man (Numb. v. 15; Judg. vii. 13; Ezek. iv. 12), but also for horses (1 Kings iv. 28). That it was nevertheless of the less-valued grain, we have significant indications, in its being prescribed for the "jealousy offering" (Numb. v. 15, comp. with Lev. ii. 1), and in its being part of the

purchase price of the adulteress (Hos. iii. 2). Its derivation in the Hebrew, from a verbal root signifying "to bristle," is in noticeable analogy with the Latin *hordeum*, from *horreo*. Gesenius's observation, that the singular of the word given above in the Hebrew marks the "growing crop," and the plural the "grain" itself, seems hardly corroborated by this single passage at all events. The *lentile*, on the other hand, was a species of *bean*, and used much for soup, of which Egyptian tomb-paintings furnish illustration (Gen. xxv. 29—34; 2 Sam. xvii. 28; Ezek. iv. 9). Sonnini, in his "Travels" (translation of Hunter, iii. 288), tells us that still the Egyptian poor eat *lentile*-bread, but, what is more *apropos* of this passage, that in making it they prefer to mix a little "barley" with it. This apparent discrepancy between the parallel accounts not only counts in itself for very little, but may easily be surmounted by supposing that, though it be written that the "parcel" of ground was "full of lentiles," and again "full of barley," the description may only amount to this, that such parcels were in close juxtaposition. But if not, our allusion above to the possible error in the Hebrew words will sufficiently explain the variation.

Ver. 14.—This, as well as the latter half of the preceding verse, belongs to the account of Shammah the Hararite (2 Sam. xxiii. 11), and in the parallel the verbs are accordingly in the *singular* number. In that same place Shammah is called the "son of Agee," which probably answers to the "Shage" of the present chapter (ver. 34), where our reading should rather be, "Jonathan the son of Shammah the son of Shage, the Hararite." The word "Hararite" designates, according to Gesenius, "one from the hill-country," i.e. the hill-country of Judah or Ephraim, and would be equivalent with us to such a description as "the mountaineer."

Ver. 15.—*Three of the thirty.* The *thirty* here alluded to have not been mentioned either in the Book of Samuel or here, except by implication of our ver. 11, where we might imagine the sense to be, "Now these are the names of the mighty men, *in number thirty*, whom David had, viz. Jashobeam, an Hachmonite, the chief of the *thirty*." Nor are we told in either place who were the "*three*" here spoken of. The article is absent in both places, or it would be convenient and natural to suppose that the three just mentioned are those intended, which cannot, however, be taken for granted. The language of vers. 20—22, 25, might rather indicate that the three mentioned in those verses are those in question. The repeated uncertainty in which we are left on matters to which no

intrinsic difficulty adheres seems evidence of injured manuscripts rather than of anything else. To the rock to David. This is the right reading, *אֶל־צַדְקָה אֶל־צַדְקָה*; and that in the parallel passage ("to David in the harvest-time") is not correct, *אֶל־צַדְקָה אֶל־צַדְקָה*. The cave of Adullam. Adullam, evidently a place of great antiquity (Gen. xxxviii. 1, 12, 20), is mentioned in Josh. xii. 15; xv. 35; it was the seat then of a Canaanite king. It afterwards lay in Judah, in that lowland (called often the Shephelah) that ran from Joppa to Gaza, near the Mediterranean Sea. It kept name and fame to the last (2 Chron. xi. 7; Neh. xi. 30). The "rock" marks the limestone cliffs of the region (Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine," pp. 254—259, edit. 1866). We read of it, as David's refuge (1 Sam. xxii. 1, 2). From our present passage, and its parallel we should have concluded that it could not have been far from Bethlehem. In this sense Dr. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," pp. 606, 607) refers to the tradition that fixes the cave at a spot now called *Khureitun*, between Bethlehem and the Dead Sea, and says, "Leaving our horses in charge of wild Arabs, and taking one Arab for a guide, we started for the cave, having a fearful gorge below, gigantic cliffs above, and the path winding along a shelf of the rock, narrow enough to make the nervous among us shudder. At length from a great rock, hanging on the edge of this shelf, we sprang by a long leap into a low window, which opened into the perpendicular face of the cliff. We were then within the hold of David, and creeping half-doubled through a narrow crevice for a few rods, we stood beneath the dark vault of the first grand chamber of this mysterious and oppressive cavern. Our whole collection of lights did little more than make the damp darkness visible. After groping about as long as we had time to spare, we returned to the light of day, fully convinced that, with David and his lion-hearted followers inside, all the strength of Israel under Saul could not have forced an entrance, and would not even have attempted it." The host. For this word "host" (*τηρημα*) the parallel (2 Sam. xxiii. 13) has the "life of the Philistines" (but the Authorized Version, the "troop of"), i.e. the beasts and cattle of the Philistines. So also the Syriac Version translates. The Septuagint shows in this place *παρεμβολή*, and in Samuel *τάργητα*. The valley of Rephaim. The situation of this notable valley is not certain. Yet there can be little doubt, in spite of Fürst ("Handwortbuch," ii. 383), who supposes a situation north-west of Jerusalem, that it must be near Bethlehem, and therefore south-west of the city. The word employed here for "valley" (*ταργητα*)

should mark an *enclosed one*. *Rephaim* means "giants." Hence our Authorized Version, "The valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants northward" (Josh. xv. 8; xviii. 16; also 2 Sam. v. 18; comp. with our present passage; and 2 Sam. v. 22 comp. with ch. xiv. 9).

Ver. 16.—David was then in the hold. This statement may, perhaps, sufficiently identify this occasion with that of 2 Sam. v. 17, 18; where it is expressly said that "David went down to the hold" (תִּמְמָר being the word *found there as here*). Garrison. The Hebrew here says "officer" (שָׁרֵךְ), but the parallel passage has "garrison" (אָמָר); yet, according to Gesenius ('Thes.', 903), the former word has both meanings. He is right, certainly, if he means that it has received both translations, for see 1 Kings iv. 19 for the one, and our present passage supplies the other (1 Sam. x. 5; xiii. 3).

Ver. 17.—The well of Bethlehem . . . at the gate. Nothing else is known of this well. No trace of it exists now, according to Dr. Robinson ('Bibl. Res.', i. 473). The traditional well is half a mile distant, to the north of the town, and consists of a group of three cisterns, while the present town is supplied with water by an aqueduct.

Ver. 18.—David . . . poured it out to the Lord. This was done after the nature of a libation (1 Sam. vii. 6; Judg. vi. 20; Exod. xxx. 9; Gen. xxxv. 14).

Ver. 19.—My God forbid if me. Compare the Hebrew of this with that of the expression in the parallel (2 Sam. xxiii. 17), where *my* is found in the place of *our*. It is probable that the preposition *me* is lost from before "Jehovah." Shall I drink the blood, etc.? i.e. the water which has been obtained at the imminent peril of the life of these three brave men (comp. Gen. iv. 10, 11; ix. 4—6; John vi. 53, 54).

Ver. 20.—Abishai . . . was chief of the three. It is remarkable that again the name of one of the three is wanting, even if we take Benaiah of ver. 22 for the second.

Ver. 21.—Than the two. The Hebrew (כִּי־בְּנֵי) cannot be thus translated, but possibly the words may mark the *second set* of three.

Ver. 22.—Benaiah. His father Jehoiada was chief priest (ch. xxvii. 5). Benaiah was, therefore, a Levite by tribe, though Kabzeel (Josh. xv. 21) was in Judah far south. He was "captain of the host for the third month . . . and in his course were twenty and four thousand" (ch. xxvii. 5). When in our ver. 25 it is said that "David set him over his guard," the allusion probably is to his uniform and prolonged command of "the Cherethites and Pelethites" (2 Sam.

viii. 18; xx. 23; 1 Kings i. 38; ch. xviii. 17) His fidelity and influence remained into Solomon's time (1 Kings i. 8, 10, 32, 38, 44; ii. 35; iv. 4).

Ver. 23.—Five cubits high. This height is not given in the parallel passage; it means seven feet six inches. A spear like a weaver's beam (so 1 Sam. xvii. 7; 2 Sam. xxi. 19).

Ver. 24.—The name. There is no article in the Hebrew.

Ver. 25.—Over his guard. If the reference is not as above (see ver. 22), the margin of the parallel (2 Sam. xxiii. 23) may be followed, which would translate "guard" as *council*. This Gesenius adopts, and translates "privy council." There seems, however, no necessity for this, with the references before us above given (2 Sam. viii. 18, etc., to which may be added ch. xxvii. 6, which shows Benaiah to be captain of the third division).

Vers. 26—41.—These verses correspond with vers. 24—39 in 2 Sam. xxiii., and with them the subject ends there, though not here. The list announced here as comprising "the valiant men of the armies," is unannounced there, but, beginning with the same name, Asahel, it calls him "one of the thirty," and suggests the inference that those who follow will make up the rest. The number that follows (coinciding in this respect strictly with our list here) is itself thirty, which, though one too many, may be considered satisfactorily accounted for in the fact of the untimely death of Asahel, already recorded (2 Sam. ii. 23). Considering the exact crisis at which he died, it is very likely that his place should be compensated for, although his name were unremoved from the honourable list. Amid the difficulties that develop themselves in the *contents* of these lists, when compared, the comparison of them aids the conviction that, so far as they go together, they do stand for "the thirty" spoken of in both places, and that a sentence or two here and there, now lost or corrupted beyond recognition, would clear up the whole subject. The comparison also seems to make it clear that the compiler of Chronicles, meaning to go beyond an enumeration of *the thirty*, nowhere speaks of thirty after ver. 25. On the other hand, the writer of the account in Samuel carefully sums up all (ver. 39) in the words, "*thirty and seven in all*"—an addition which means either the actual thirty-one given and the two sets of three each; or the thirty, with the two sets of three each and Joab over all. Our present chapter, however, goes on to the number forty-eight in all, vers. 41—47, adding sixteen to the thirty-two which precede. Beside some minor differences, it must be said that *at fewest three names, Hepher, Abijah, and*

Milhar, in Chronicles, resist identification with those that should (from position) correspond with them in the list of Samuel and with any others. And the same thing may be said of the same number in the list of Samuel (*Elka, Eliam, Bani*) when compared with the list now before us. The points of contact and clearest identification are, therefore, in so great a majority and are so uniformly distributed that, although it is left hard to decide the causes of them, these differences cannot throw any discredit upon the list as a whole. Perhaps the most probable suggestion to be offered is that the knowledge of the writer of the Book of Samuel enabled him to supersede the names of such as were soon lost to their brave career by death by other names; or, resting on the same fundamental reason, there may have been two different *editions* of the list, to one of which the writer of Samuel was indebted, and to the other the compiler of Chronicles.

Ver. 27.—*Harorite*. The parallel passage has *Harodite*, the local identification of Shammoth, as from *Harod*, known for its spring (Judg. vii. 1), by which Gideon encamped, where also the army was tested by its mode of drinking. Some think it the same with the fountain of Jezreel (1 Sam. xxix. 1). Izrahite seems to have been the family distinction of Shammoth (ch. xxvii. 8), from Zerah son of Judah. He is the fifth captain. In the parallel his name is followed by *Elka*, who is also called “the Harorite.” *Helez* the Pelonite. Though the parallel place has *Paltite*, the present form probably should hold its own. *Helez* is the seventh captain of division, and said to belong to the “sons of Ephraim” (see ch. xxvii. 10, and Septuagint in all three passages).

Ver. 29.—*Sibbecai; Ilai*. Both of these names are conceivably reconcilable with the *Mebunnai* and *Zalmon* of the parallel place, through the very possible mistake and substitution of one Hebrew character for another. Sibbecai was the eighth captain; he was of the family of Zerah, and of the town of Hushah (ch. iv. 4).

Ver. 34.—The sons of Hashem the Gizonite. This sentence is unmanageable as it stands, and is insufficiently assisted from its parallel. But if from this latter we take the suggestion of the preposition “from” (Authorized Version) before “the sons” (which, however, is not in the Hebrew), and from the Alexandrian Septuagint, the suggestion of the name *Gouni* (גָּוְןִי), *Guni*, (ch. v. 15) in the place of *Gizonite* (גִּזּוֹנִי), we should obtain a coherent reading. But this would be mere conjecture suggested by the Septuagint, and “the Gizonite” offers the difficulty of the presence of

the article, which would not subsist with the proper name *Guni*. Were it not that the word גָּוְןִי is found in both passages all difficulty would disappear with its disappearance. The remainder of this verse, in relation to vers. 32 and 33 of the parallel, illustrates opportunely the uncertainties of the text. For, as seen above, Jonathan is the grandson of Shage (*Agee*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 11), and son of Shammah, while (2 Chron. xxiii. 32, 33) the parallel reads “Jonathan,” with no connective word “son” at all, yet supplies the right name, “Shammah the Hararite” for the father, and omits all mention of Shage.

Ver. 35.—*Sacar . . . Eliphel . . . Ur*. For these three names the parallel shows *Sharar*, *Eliphelet*, and *Ahasbai* respectively.

Ver. 36.—*Hepher the Mecherathite*. Although this name is not found in the parallel passage, it is tolerably plain that the niche for it is left before the words (ver. 34), “the son of the Maachathite,” which last word answers to our *Mecherathite*. *Ahijah* the Pelonite. This name cannot be identified with the “Eliam the son of Alithophel the Gilonite,” which answers to it in the parallel.

Ver. 37.—*Hezro* appears as *Hezrai* in Samuel. (For Carmel, which lay south of Hebron, see Josh. xv. 55.) *Naarai* the son of *Ezrai*. The differences between these words and those of the parallel (ver. 35), “*Paarai* the *Arbite*,” or *Arab* (Josh. xv. 52), are not formidable to reconcile.

Ver. 38.—*Joel*. This name is also easily to be reconciled with the *Iyal* of the parallel passage (ver. 36), though there is nothing to evidence which should stand. *Milhar* the son of *Haggeri*. For this we have in the parallel place (ver. 36) the names “*Bani* the *Gadite*;” but before these comes the last word of the previous clause, “of *Zobah*.” When these three words are compared with the three of our present passage, it is very possible to bring them into harmony (‘Speaker’s Commentary,’ *in loc.*). *Zobah* was a district of Syria in the time of Israel’s first three kings, stretching north-east and east towards the *Euphrates* (1 Sam. xiv. 47; 2 Sam. viii. 7).

Ver. 39.—*Zelek the Ammonite, . . . the Berothite*. Among David’s great men were evidently numbered some foreigners, whose admiration and fidelity he must have won. Hence the mention (ver. 38) of *Zolah*, and here of the *Ammonite* (2 Sam. viii. 12: xii. 26—31), the *Berothite* (Beroth, originally a Hivite city, Josh. ix. 17, fell to the lot of Benjamin, Josh. xviii. 25; to it belonging Rimmon and his two sons, Rechab and Baanah, possibly native Canaanites, the murderers of Ishbosheth, as above), and (ver. 41) the *Hillite*. The armour-bearer To

be made armour-bearer was a sign of honour and attachment (1 Sam. xvi. 21; 2 Sam. xviii. 15).

Ver. 40.—*The Ithrite.* One of the families of Kirjath-jearim (ch. ii. 53). Other similar colonists from Kirjath-jearim, and descended from Shobal, were the Puthite, the Shumathite, and the Izrahite. With this verse we count up, *including* the dropped-out Elika, the names of “thirty mighty men.” And we may understand Samuel’s *thirty-seven* to consist of these, increased by Uriah and the *two parties of three* each.

Ver. 41—47.—These verses are assisted by no parallel, either in the Book of Samuel or elsewhere. Of the sixteen names which they contain, not a few are to be found elsewhere, yet not as designating the same persons. Also, while the *Reubenite* and the *Gentile* nouns *Ashterathite* and *Aroerite* are at once recognized, the *Mithnite*, *Tizite*, *Mahavite*, and *Mesobaitite* are not traceable elsewhere, the plural form of the last but one being an additional source of obscurity.

Ver. 42.—*Thirty with him.* The Hebrew

preposition here translated “with” appears thus, *וְבָנָיו*, and will naturally translate “and in addition to him.” As he was a captain, this addendum may probably refer to those over whom he was captain, and whom he brought in his train, and who were possibly themselves officers. As the writer of Chronicles indicates no difference, nor any sense of a change of persons enumerated, when he has reached (ver. 41) Uriah the Hittite, it would all the rather be consistent with his own superscription when (ver. 26) he proposes to set forth simply “the valiant men of the armies” without confining their number to the “thirty.”

Ver. 44.—*The Ashterathite.* Ashteroth was in East Manasseh (ch. vi. 71). The Aroerite, Aroer lay east of the Jordan (Josh. xiii. 16, 25).

Ver. 46.—*The Mahavite.* It has been suggested that this word may stand for Mahanite, from Mahanaim.

Ver. 47.—*The Mesobaitite.* This name is entirely unknown, unless it may be the same as Mezobah.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—*The vicarious aspects of human life twofold—toward man and toward God.* In this verse two leading and very important phases of human life are brought to our remembrance. They may seem of unequal importance, the second being of higher character than the first. Yet, perhaps, they are more closely connected and even interwoven with one another than first thoughts might suppose. And so far-reaching and widespread are the issues of both, that it is needless to insist on much comparison between them to the prejudice of the former. The lesson, also, of both of them, charged though it is with serious responsibility, is, on the whole, of a cheerful, elevating kind. We might do well to separate them sometimes in our private meditation, simply in order to fix a more specific attention upon each. But it is not without valuable suggestion that they stand together here, nor shall they be divorced in the present consideration of them. They remind us—

I. **OF THE VICARIOUS PRINCIPLE THAT ENTERS SO LARGE INTO HUMAN LIFE, PERVADING IT, ALMOST LEAVENING IT, IN MEN’S MUTUAL RELATIONS.** In the illustration of it now before us, it shows itself in the shape and the fact of *one* enjoying royal name and place, wealth and ease and dignity, while *another* incurs the risk and does the work—without pay—of that place. The life that was lived as between Saul and David would no doubt produce many instances and forms of this, but the one mentioned in this verse, and mentioned as it would appear by many consequent voices at the same time, is enough to tell the tale. Those instances commenced from the time that David challenged, defied, and successfully overcame Goliath, the Philistine champion. But as time went on, they became systematized and almost the rule, rather than merely matter of frequent occurrence. The general fact is patent. It grows in the structure, it runs throughout and across the texture of human life and society. It is a *phenomenon*, often merely as such inviting, often provoking, the deep thoughtful study of those who are but onlookers at any time. But again, it is as a personal keen *experience* that it most commonly opens the eyes and wakens the aching inquiry of those who have first suffered many a pang and rasping mortification. The real inventor is often a very different man from the nominal one, the real workman another than he who carries off the praise. The hand of one takes the gain of what was wrought by the brain of another; and the smile of one has for its correlative the bleeding heart of another. The temples of the fortune and wealth

and splendour of the very few are built on the excessive toil and wrecked health of vast numbers. And even in the natural order of things, the fame of the great rests on the substructure of millions of lives of the humble obscure, whose industry, honesty, endurance, are the staple and the strength of the whole community, and whose head and heart are often of the most superior. The edifice that towers the highest, in fact, must rest on the broadest base. These considerations may guide us to the following conclusions upon the general subject, suggested by the particular instance so naively expressed now before us:—1. There is, beyond doubt, a vast amount of gratuitous, unjust, cruel, vicarious suffering in the world, and found in men's mutual relations. 2. There is also, beyond doubt, a vast amount of vicarious joy and *advantage*. The striving, the toil, the genius, the self-sacrifice of *one* often serve, not the private selfish advantage of *some one* other, but to a most beneficent degree they serve the advantage and help the joy of *very many* others. 3. Whether it be in the matter of suffering or of advantage and joy, this presence is by no means all due to the action, and mournful action, of human selfishness, error, greed. There is Divine design in it, Divine use for it. It is one of the strongest of the cohesive forces that contribute to hold together the conglomerate mass and yet very various fellowship of humanity. The *entanglement* that results from this *unequal sys'em* of exchange and substitution (the particular instances of which are so intricate, often so inscrutable, apparently untoward) constitutes probably one of the most ubiquitous and unresting of the mutual attachments and attractions of human society. 4. Even within the experience of the very individual at whose expense awhile the *vicariousness* seems to take effect, there are not unfrequently large redeeming and compensating considerations. As for instance *here*: (1) David had the opportunity given to him of *learning*, learning well, the profession of a king, learning it practically, “*even when Saul was king*” in reality. If he were doing work and encountering risk, which formally did not belong to him, he was deriving untold advantages and the facilities of experience. (2) He was being divinely permitted to *mark himself out* for the dignity when it should become vacant, in the eyes of all those with whom, ere long, the decision and gift of it would, under God, rest. How many men, in how many directions, would value just the corresponding opportunity above all things! How much would it be worth to one! (3) Even during learning, education, and possibly much suffering, David was evidently, to the eye that could see deepest, to the heart that should beat truest, receiving the decoration of *real* honour. To a great mind, to a pure heart, it is sometimes the highest investment of honour which could be conferred, to be the one divinely selected to do the work, while others take the pay. This is not of man, nor by man, but God's own *chosen* children recognize and value above everything else what are also his *chosen* methods of reward.

II. OF THE VICARIOUS PRINCIPLE THAT ENTERS SO LARGELY INTO HUMAN LIFE, IN ITS MOST DIRECT DIVINE RELATIONS. The latter part of the verse before us is of the highest and most precious significance to *every* Christian man, and certainly not least so to the Christian pastor and minister. “The Lord thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel.” Every servant of God from the first was set to be a witness of God and a witness for God, by word and deed before the world. And every Christian is called to be a witness of Jesus Christ and his truth, and a witness for these before the world, in all he says and does. We object to such an appellation as “*vicar of Christ*,” or “*viceroy*” of Christ, on behalf of the pope or of any other one man exclusively of others. But the description of the latter part of this verse applies accurately to all the pastors—the under-shepherds of Christ's fold and flocks—and by inference, in their measure and degree, to all his people whomsoever. All of these have something to say, have much to do, “*in the stead of Christ*.” Nor should they repine when they may be called to bear and suffer in the Name and for the sake of Christ. The fact before us is just simply this, that David was entrusted by God and on behalf of God with a great work, which was and could be only the work of God himself in the last resort. The people are emphatically *his*; none could provide the food but he (Ps. xxiii. 1); none could find the wisdom to rule, “the wisdom profitable to direct,” the gift to “rule” but he. And he said, nevertheless, “Thou shalt feed . . . thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel.” Out of the one simple but great fact before us we may select some special phases of it. 1. It is a *very elevating reality* of human life and work that it is not altogether shut off to

a drudgery peculiar to itself, but that it is dignified by being called to similar work with that of Christ. The power, the wisdom, the love, the very thought of that work must first come from heavenly source, and be sustained by streams from the heavenly source; but then these should often betray their heavenly origin, and the human worker flash out tokens of the indwelling of Divine principle, gift, grace. It had been quite possible to suppose a hard-and-fast line drawn between the humblest of the Divine work amid men and the very highest of the human. But it is not so. It is far otherwise. And so soon as ever the clear pattern was shown on earth by Jesus himself, of what was to be and to be done, not a very few and a very picked band, but every one of his wide Church, was called to do *similar* work—yes, to do it and to bear the burden of it, and that not with eye-service as to men, but “*as the servants of Christ.*” 2. It is a very elevating and encouraging fact in the renewed life of humanity that with such solemn responsibility attaching to it in work to be done, no less than Godlike in character, no less than Christ-like in execution, it is work *not severed* from Divine co-operation. Let us call it *vicarious*. Let us the rather prize it as such, and “love to have it so.” Yet is it not the cold vicariousness of so large a proportion of our earthly labour—unwarmed by the presence, by the help, by the smile, by the reward of at least acknowledgment at the hands of those for whom we both do and bear much. No, indeed. It is work of *co-operation*, where in those co-operating extremes meet—the weakness, the poverty, the ignorance, the finiteness of us men, with the omnipotence, the wealth, the knowledge, and the infiniteness of God the Father; of Christ, the Shepherd of the sheep; of the Spirit of all grace and light. None work *for* God but his Spirit is *with* them. None work for Jesus but “*lo, he is present in the midst*” of their smallest group. Therefore it is plain that God does not so honour us as simply to *devolve* his work in Christ upon us, but rather to *involve* us in his doing, and lift us up into his sphere of work. The co-operating of Christ by his Spirit with his servants, when their work and their suffering shall seem most *vicarious*, is therefore a grand and most noteworthy fact as compared with our labour-relations and our suffering-relations, as fellow-creatures, to one another. 3. Over and above all other elevating and cheering thoughts suggested by this fact of God’s calling us to work *for* him, and yet uniting himself with us therein, there remains such a one as this. It is a token of a certain harmony of plan and thought between human society and the perfection of that above. It is some “shadow of things to come.” It is some foreshadowing of Divine goodness. The condescension and the grace are some indications of what shall be. They are not mere fictitious, tempting, beguiling persuasions of the way, for the “pilgrims of the night;” but they are rather snatches and earhests of the temper prevailing in the “city yet to come.” It is a large and far from ignoble principle, the *vicarious* principle—cost what it may of smart, occasionally or systematically, among ourselves. But it is an indefinite extension, an immense expansion, it is a very glorification of the principle, when Christ enters on a similar footing and makes the circle henceforth a sacred circle. After doing and suffering all which he has done, “even unto death,” for his people, he not simply hallows by his own example the summons to us to work and to suffer *for* our fellow-creatures and *for* him, but also favours therein the thought, in its very highest development, of our being “one with him, even as he is one with” the eternal Father. In a word, to work or to suffer in the stead of Christ is some earnest of entering in due time the society of which he is the Head.

Vers. 3-10.—*The throne of justice and security.* These verses are morally and essentially connected with one another. They speak of one thing—the “making of David king.” And we may notice in them—

I. THE FORM THAT REPRESENTED THIS. The most ancient Scriptures enrich us with the knowledge of the very earliest customs of men. Many of these may be obsolete. But two things are remarkable respecting them, viz. (1) how some of them remain, and with but slightly altered dress; (2) how those that do not remain often embodied some principle to which all growth of time has shown a growing importance to belong. These earliest customs of men, recorded in Scripture, seem, further, not only to have embodied certain principles, but passed, as they often were, beneath the eye of God, we may feel that they did something more—they enshrined with a real sacredness.

and invested with a special honour the principle that was to last and to gain in significance when the outer shell of custom or form was withered to nothing. The ceremony which set forth the making of a king of Israel was that of anointing. This was the third time David had been anointed. But these successive acts of anointing were not vain repetitions. The *first* was his private anointing, by Samuel, according to God's word and according to God's private call (1 Sam. xvi. 1, 12, 13). The *second* was when David became king over Judah, and when the call and the willing consent of his fellow-men, and of those up to this time his fellow-citizens, were added to the Divine appointment (2 Sam. ii. 4). And the *third* was on the occasion before us, when the heads of the whole people, with hearty unanimity, added the sanction of their presence and consent. Now, therefore, the anointing was finally performed. It was a ceremony, but not one destitute of meaning and of usefulness. It marked David to the eyes of all the nation as their "feeder and ruler," appointed of God, accepted of themselves. And it reminded himself of the solemn responsibility laid upon him to fulfil his duty to men as under the commands of God.

II. THE CONDITION PRECEDENT TO IT. "David made a covenant with them . . . before the Lord." Beyond doubt, the choice and the call and the ordination of David were all of God. Beyond doubt, nothing could be safer or better for all the people than to accept his deed and appointment unquestioningly. But there are ever an earthly order and a visible sign of *some* kind for us men, answering to the Divine will. These God does not only permit, but, as we believe, he enjoins them. It is another indication of the fact that God would ever be lifting our level nearer his own. The exact matter of the covenant is not here given us, nor in fact in any of the parallel places. Yet with very little hesitation we may say that we hear the echoes of it from the death-bed of David (2 Sam. xxiii. 2-5). It consisted of a solemn mutual engagement—he "to rule just, ruling in the fear of God;" they to follow and obey. God's covenants with man at any and every time are of the nature of free promises of mercy and grace, but of what in their very nature require the loving acceptance and use of them to impart availlessness to them and to keep them availless, and this is the only kind of condition attaching to them—no meritorious condition. But in the fact of this covenant being made, and in the fact of its being so explicitly recorded, we have an evidence of God's condescending attention to our *mutual* relations. Though he it is who with sovereign right elects and with the right of a sovereign voice *calls* one and another to pre-eminent place and authority over us, yet he bids us see and watch the thing that is transpiring, and insist upon the right and just being done, and he submits his own choice to the verdict of the conscience of his people. We have a great ecclesiastical principle, in embryo, as we might suppose, an instance of God's royal *congr^ed'Elire*, entrusted to the elders of all Israel, and not formally put into effect by these until his own chosen one has entered into a covenant with them.

III. THE MORAL SUPPORTS NECESSARY TO THIS KING-MAKING. Remarkable, and in some respects even unique, as was the raising of David to be king, in this final appointment and anointing of him, yet it follows the lines of any other high appointment to command of one man amongst his fellow-men. He is not really and for ever to be hedged in as a divinity, nor of divinity, except as this highest power works by human agency. The higher such a position is, the more necessary is it that it be not artificially disengaged from the aid, the approval, the moral influence of others. The exalted individual's temptation to forget this, and even to override it, has very often been unceremoniously enough called to account and fiercely rebuked. The hierarchy that obtains in human society, in the human family, may be accepted as an incontestable fact, and, therefore so far forth as authorized of nature. But neither ought this to be strained or exaggerated. Much less are we to create, favour, or permit violent gaps between rank and rank, class and class. The most insensible gradations from rank to rank and class to class make the strongest, safest society. History proves, by instances almost innumerable, that to disbelieve and affront this principle is disaster, but to set it at nought and defy it is to court destruction, and that without remedy. We must not overlook the significance of the expression that "the chief of the mighty men whom David had" neither held themselves aloof from him nor were held at a distance by him in his new greatness. They stood near the throne. They helped to uphold its dignity and the authority of him who sat upon it. There is really no

such thing as actual irresponsibility between man and man. None is so strong as to be able to boast himself independent of the help, the love, the good opinion of his fellow-men. Conscience only can claim for itself the prerogative of freedom to do and speak as though irresponsible to man, but even these noblest displays of human power and virtue do not practically deliver from the consequences and the patent fact of responsibility; while in all inferior attempts the power is weakness, and the travesty of the virtue is the licence of vice. But no, David's mighty men strenuously held by him, and they were in turn seconded by the entire of an enthusiastic and faithful people. Their one combined aim was to put stability into his kingdom and to make him a strong and prosperous king. And it was all "according to the word of the Lord concerning Israel." Happy king! happy people! David had not to pay the very common penalty of exaltation and empire. The people were a willing people in the day of his power. Would that it may last, last to the end—must have been the ardent wish of every patriot that day—the humble prayer of every earnest, spiritual Israelite!

Vers. 15—19.—*The bravery of David's three mighty men, and the better bravery of himself.* The graphic narrative of these verses needs no interpretation in the sense of either criticism or explanation. It offers itself, as it were, exclusively to the use of instruction, and to the illustration of the possibilities of human character. In doing so, it brings to view something of the weakness, much of the strength, and not least what is of the Divine in that character. Lessons manifestly present themselves from the consideration of the conduct of the three brave warriors in the first instance, and then of that of David by himself. Let us notice—

I. THE CONDUCT OF THE THREE WARRIORs. 1. *Their courage.* It was, perhaps, the least part of their excellence at this time. They were trained to deeds of dash and daring. They took pride in these. They were, by natural constitution and temperament, and now by some training and practice, predisposed to them. Their courage, therefore, must be somewhat the less reckoned to their praise, as containing but small measure of effort of any moral element. Possibly we ought even to deduct some little from it, as laying itself open in a degree to the charge of recklessness, on an occasion which was not one of absolute necessity in one aspect, nor of any moral necessity in another. Yet, nevertheless, if we cannot but admire the self-risking bravery, we shall not do wrong in crediting it with some intrinsic claim to commendation. For, to say the very least, how well it contrasts with the carefulness, the cautiousness, the lingeringness of cold self-calculation! And how well it illustrates how quality resides still in human nature which on occasion—if only the occasion be an altogether worthy one—can achieve very great things! 2. *Their utter unselfishness.* At all events, there is not the slightest trace of selfishness in what they did. They ran not for a prize of honour or money. They expect no crown, no garland, for their achievement if they shall be successful. The pleasure of ministering to a master they serve and love is the only reward they appear to contemplate. 3. *Their spontaneous service.* They wait for no command, nor even for a request. They do not so much as hear a wish, so uttered that they could interpret it into the nature of an intended hint or suggestion. They *overhear* only, and what they overhear is the sighing out of a wish. And probably it was the naturalness and the homeliness of it which helped much to move them—the deep-drawn breath and the utterance of heart which was recognizable in it, though the expression but of a bodily appetite. What *chords, strange* to say, one sentence, one tone, of nature's own voice will have efficacy to wake in the hearts of others, and, to the testimony of human goodness be it said, not least so when the voice is a voice of want! "God loves a cheerful giver," a willing workman, an obedient servant; rarely indeed does he behold more than this. For we cannot anticipate his command, nor run before his thought, nor be freer than his will. Yet let us feel it thus, not as from man to God, but as from man to man. If it be part of his glory and not the least of the tokens of his pitiful mercy to us feeble, faltering, limping full oft, that he take the will for the deed, and accept the thought for the act, how well must the sight suit him as some sign of nature's return, when he may see the deed of any one of us to a brother or sister, "swift to the thought or wish divined, swift to the sigh o'erheard."

II. THE CONDUCT OF DAVID. And we note that it is marked: 1. *By a mistake of the tongue.* We may allow that there was everything that there could be under the circumstances to palliate the mistake of a great man and a good man. But for that very reason let it be the more closely scanned. The facts were simply these. Here is a man whose slightest word will be likely to go further far than the entreaty and the argument and the urgent, plaintive expostulation of others. His position, his character, the known character of those now around him, the crisis of the hour, which witnessed such flush of military excitement in the royal camp, all argue this. Then that was the greater reason why, amid many a thought within, and the glowing of feeling, a special guard be put on the tongue. Yet the wish itself was an innocent wish, the outcome of a most innocent appetite, universally allowed to be at the same time an imperious appetite—innocent if gratified, agonizing if denied. Even Jesus, and on the cross, said, “I thirst.” But David’s was not a cry of mere thirst. It was not merely a sigh for the relief of thirst. If the thirst had been severer the evident probability is that it would not have been the water of Bethlehem’s gate, but some nearer and some more possible, which would have been invoked. Or, again, we may not grudge to take into account the praiseworthy *class* of feelings on which David’s mention of Bethlehem’s well drew. Home, and youth, and memory, and affectionate associations all contributed to it. Yet the “whole array” and complete circle of explanation and palliation constitute the happier condition for decisively settling the problem. These all, we are reminded, must under certain circumstances be “blown away.” They all must yield to facts. They only garland the victim if allowed to remain. It seemed harsh when once Jesus, of gentlest lip, said, “For every idle word that men shall speak” they shall be brought to judgment, and shall give account. How often, how genuinely, that has struck men, and good men, as “a hard saying”! But, after all, what is there like *facts* for “bringing men to judgment”? And the *fact* here is that “the word,” inopportune sighed out with ever so much feeling, on the part of a good man and a great man, who hadn’t a wish or an idea of doing harm, produced effects immediately, at the very thought of which but a few hours after he himself shuddered again. It teaches us, great and small, how great is the peril of the tongue, and that the more pensive, tender, pathetic tone may be the more mischievous one. Born of the heart, it knows and exerts its energy to touch heart again, and its sphere is amid material the most dangerous because the most explosive. 2. *By a noble, practical acknowledgment of the mistake.* David shuddered to think of the narrow risk which had been just challenged, and, though it was now safely escaped, he refused to drink that water. How soon, by the way, mind can conquer body, conscience can master appetite, deep moral and religious feeling put to flight sentiment, and the flash of conviction scathe like lightning a whole host of excuses! This acknowledgment of mistake on the part of David was all the more noble: (1) Because it was practical. “He would not drink of it. . . . My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing . . . drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy; for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it.” David does not underrate the moral aspects of what had been taking place, and which was distinctly due to himself. He does not allow the plea that, as the mischief has been done, the only thing now left was to make the best of it. There was great moral honesty in this, loyal and even severe fidelity to conscience and its upbraiding, when he at once determines that he can take no advantage of enjoyment or of use from that water. And from the midst of error there rises up with fragrance a pure testimony to the moral feeling and moral principle of the wrong-doer. The recovery and return from their mistakes of those who essentially desire and follow after the right and good, wonderfully contrast sometimes with the corresponding sequel in the case of others. (2) Because it had to run the gauntlet of some of the most painful of all kinds of misunderstanding. It lay itself open to a suspicion of ungratefulness, that would seem the greater in proportion to the greatness of the efforts which had been made and the risk run. The appearance of ingratitude at such an untimely juncture, in presence of such devotion, was the appearance which a keen and noble sensibility would shrink from above everything else. How much man will do at one time to *save* appearances, at another to *court* appearances! but what a test of principle, of resolution, of moral bravery, it is when sometimes a man is called on to *set at naught* appearances, and confide himself to right alone and to present

conviction alone. (3) And lastly, because of the homage which David paid to a principle distinctly religious as well as moral. David did not throw the water away, he did not give it to another, he did not beg the heroes avail themselves of it, but he “poured it out to the Lord.” This was, no doubt, from his point of view and for his time of day an act of religion. That which was sacred with human life owns to one sovereign Proprietor alone. To him David took it, with faith in his existence, with faith in his watchful notice and oversight, with faith in his rewarding providence. It may be considered, indeed, open to possibility that David was permitted to feel in his own act the meaning of the blood of sacrifice. This, for the benefit of whomsoever it may be, must be poured out before the Lord God himself, if it is to have anything of the efficacy of expiation and atonement. While for a moment we should think of it in this aspect, we may be taught, both for David and for ourselves, that he who sacrifices to his God the thing he might most desire, shall find in the very midst of that sacrifice **the principle, the earnest, the assured hope of life itself.**

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—A true leader. David's life was made up of several successive stages; and, as we read his biography and so trace his course, we see clearly—what at the time he could not see—how one position, one experience, prepared for the next. His youth was a preparation for his manhood, his court life for the throne, exile for power, rule over Judah for sway over united Israel. The seven years during which Saul's son ruled over the other tribes were the years of David's reign over Judah. At the close of this period, upon the death of Ishbosheth, the elders of all Israel came to David at Hebron and offered him the crown. This was the occasion upon which they made the acknowledgment, “Even when Saul was king, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel.” This was a recognition of the inborn qualities of true leadership, called forth by circumstances, and cultivated by responsibility and action.

I. HUMAN SOCIETY IS, ACCORDING TO THE APPOINTMENT OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE, COMPOSED OF THE LEADERS AND THE LED. Whilst in government there is much which is artificial, there is a natural foundation for the relationships which subsist. Parents direct the course of their children; elder brothers to some extent that of the younger; the capable, the self-confident, the experienced, are the natural leaders of the timid and submissive. In all human communities there are born leaders of men. If all distinctions were abolished to-day, to-morrow they would be revived in other forms. There is doubtless injustice in many political and social arrangements; but whilst the unjust acquisition and use of authority is of man, the principle of authority is from God.

II. LEADERSHIP OFTEN CALLS OUT GREAT QUALITIES. The fact of a man being placed in a position of influence and authority is sure, if he be capable and strong and under the domination of high principle, to elicit his best and most useful qualities. Especially will such a position foster habits of sound judgment and quick decision, habits of self-control and self-reliance, a just discernment of character, and aptness in recognizing ability and trustworthiness in others. Thus it is that a high position is fitted to lead to one yet higher (see this admirably shown in Henry Taylor's ‘Philip van Artevelde’). It was leadership which made of the shepherd son of Jesse the warrior and King of Israel. As in other departments of life, so here, exercise promotes strength and development. Let none shrink from the responsibility of guiding others when Providence calls him to this work; strength and wisdom shall be “as his day.”

III. IT IS FOR THE ADVANTAGE OF THOSE WHO ARE LED WHEN A SUITABLE AND CAPABLE LEADER IS PROVIDED BY THE DIVINE RULER. The power of “use and wont” is very strong. When men have been accustomed to be well led, their confidence in their leader grows with rapidity, and their attachment is consolidated by time. When the throne was vacant, the eyes of all Israel were turned to David. Their experience of his ability and valour, his designation by God's prophet, were the indications to them that the son of Jesse was the right man to rule over them. Events proved that they were not mistaken. The sway of David made the chosen people one great nation, and fitted them for the work appointed for them by the theocratic governor. There is in this passage a lesson specially suitable to young men of ability, education, and

position. For such God in his providence has assuredly a work to do. It is for them quietly and patiently to await the indications of Divine providence, in the persuasion that faithfulness and diligence in present duty are the best preparation for future responsibilities. It is God's prerogative to train the workman and to provide the work.—T.

Ver. 3.—David's accession. With this chapter commences another part of this Book of Chronicles, which, from this point onwards, is occupied with the reign, the character, and the exploits of David, King of Judah and Israel. His accession, related in this verse, occupies accordingly a position of interest and significance in the narrative. The point especially deserving notice in the language of this verse is the combination of Divine and human agency in the nomination of David to the throne. This combination, especially apparent in the history of theocratic Israel, is really discernible by the reflecting mind in all the events of life and history. Observe—

I. THE HUMAN AGENCY which led to David's accession to the throne. To many eyes no other than human agency was visible. 1. *His own character and services* marked David out as the one only ruler whom Israel could select and trust. Born a shepherd, he had yet within him the heart and the future of a king. 2. *A popular election* effected his elevation. It was the wish of "all Israel" that David should take the responsibilities of rule. In his election the old adage was verified—*Vox populi vox Dei*. 3. *A senatorial requisition* sanctioned and enforced the popular nomination. "All the elders of Israel" came to David, to express the general feeling and to prefer formally the national request. The appointment of the king was not the work of a moment of enthusiasm, was not the caprice of a mob; it was the deliberate act of the wisest and the noblest in the land.

II. THE DIVINE CAUSE of David's appointment to the throne. This may not have been apparent to all, but it is acknowledged with justice by the sacred historian. 1. *A Divine prediction led to David's accession.* The language of the people is very noticeable: "The Lord thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel." 2. *A prophetic designation foreshadowed it.* The appointment, so we read, was made "according to the word of the Lord by Samuel." The same inspired seer who anointed Saul was directed to nominate his immediate successor. 3. *A religious covenant ratified the nomination of David.* When he "made a covenant with them in Hebron before the Lord," he acted in accordance with his religious convictions, but he acted also in a manner harmonizing with the theocratic position of Israel. Church and state were not merely allied, they were identical. Nothing more natural than that a sacred ceremony should accompany the public and political act. There is no trace of selfish ambition on David's part. He acknowledged the tremendous responsibilities of reigning. And in the sight of Jehovah his subjects undertook to co-operate with the monarch in seeking the general good.

PRACTICAL LESSONS of great value are suggested by this passage. 1. In all human history and biography there is a blending of the human and the Divine. Worldly men are in danger of looking only to "second causes;" possibly religious men may sometimes overlook these in an exclusive regard to the one great Divine Agent. We should seek the Divine in the human. 2. Elevation to great power involves great responsibility. A man who can think only of his own pleasure or magnificence, when Providence raises him to an exalted station, is not merely irreligious, he is unreasonable and unreflecting. 3. Social and political duties can only be discharged aright when fulfilled in a devout and prayerful spirit. The more responsible our position, the greater our need of a sincere confidence in the supreme Lord who is the supreme Guide of man.—T.

Ver. 7.—"The city of David." Hitherto the city which crowned the height overlooking the Kedron valley was known as Jebus, and was held by the "people of the land." But from this time forth it was known as "the city of David," and its stronghold, Zion, with Millo and the adjacent quarters, constituted the famous and historical capital of the united kingdom—Jerusalem. Observe the significant name here given to it. Jerusalem was called "the city of David" because it was—

I. THE TROPHY OF DAVID'S VALOUR. It was his prowess and that of his captain, Joab, that wrested the stronghold from the hands of the heathen.

II. THE STRUCTURE OF DAVID'S REGAL MAGNIFICENCE AND WARLIKE STRATEGY. Probably before this time it was nothing but a primitive fortress, strongly placed upon rocky heights. But David "built the city round about," and "Joab repaired the rest of the city." Henceforth "Jerusalem was a city compact together."

III. THE SCENE OF DAVID'S REIGN. Hebron was too far south to be a suitable capital for the united kingdom. Nature made Jerusalem for a metropolis. Here the king lived and ruled, prospered, sinned, suffered, and died.

IV. THE SEAT OF DAVID'S LINE. His son Solomon and the successive occupants of the throne of Judah held sway in this city, and some of them added to its splendour and its strength. Amidst its varying fortunes, its sieges, its dismantlements, its rebuildings, its festivities, Jerusalem retained the imperishable interest conferred by its association with the great founder of the Hebrew monarchy and dynasty. It was itself a memorial of its founder's name and life.

V. THE SCENE OF THE MINISTRY AND OF THE SEPULTURE OF DAVID'S SON AND LORD. Many of our Saviour's miracles were performed, many of Christ's discourses were delivered, in Jerusalem. It was over this city that Jesus wept; it was this city that Jesus entered in his lowly triumph; it was in this city that he died, for "it could not be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem;" and after our Lord's ascension, when his apostles preached his gospel, they were instructed to do so, "beginning at Jerusalem."

VI. IN ITS DESOLATION AND DESTRUCTION IT FURNISHED AN EXAMPLE OF RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE EXECUTED ON DAVID'S POSTERITY. David's nation rejected David's Lord, and, according to his own prediction, their unbelief involved their metropolis in ruin.

"It moves me, Romans!

It confounds the counsel of my firm philosophy,
That ruin's merciless plough-hare should pass o'er
And barren salt be sown on you proud city!"

¶

Ver. 9.—David's greatness. From the time that the king began to reign over all the tribes of Israel his fortunes began to improve. Dark days had he gone through before; now the sun of prosperity blazed upon his path.

I. THE ELEMENTS OF DAVID'S GREATNESS. It consisted: 1. *In warlike achievements.* He was a man of war from his youth, and his manhood was occupied with the defence of his kingdom and the defeat of his foes. 2. *In the valour of his captains.* "Mighty men of valour" gathered around him, and contributed to his power and his fame. 3. *In the prosperity of his people.* That David's reign was an era of material prosperity is evident enough. If nothing else proved it, it would be established by the munificent offerings which the princes and the people presented at the close of David's reign towards the temple fund. 4. *In the prevalence of religion.* This appears from the establishment upon a grander scale of the Levitical and priestly orders, with the services, sacrifices, and festivals connected with the house of God. David's own psalms, sung as they were by the Levitical choirs, at once evidenced and furthered the prosperity of true religion.

II. THE GROWTH OF DAVID'S GREATNESS. He "waxed greater and greater." His career was one of continually advancing prosperity. As with most men favourably circumstanced, so in his case, success and prosperity were the cause of their own increase. "He went growing and growing."

III. THE EXPLANATION OF DAVID'S GREATNESS. "The Lord of hosts was with him." *Cui adhaeres, praest!* the Lord God may better say than any earthly prince, He to whom I attach myself, he shall prosper. "The Lord of hosts was with David;" 1. To give him regal qualities. 2. To surround him with prudent counsellors, devoted friends, and faithful servants. 3. To give him favour with the people. 4. To reveal himself to his heart, as the Subject of praise, the Law of righteousness, the Lord of life.

LESSONS. 1. It is within the power of all Christians, by the use of the means of grace, to grow constantly in true excellence. 2. Only by the presence and aid of the Most High can we be justified in looking for progress and true prosperity.—T.

Ver. 11.—Mighty men. Great epochs and great leaders call forth great men. In

most nations' histories there are periods when greatness seems to spring forth spontaneously, and to display itself in all the departments of human activity. David had the power—distinctive of true leadership—of evoking, as it were, capable, valiant, and devoted followers. In his day and in the early periods of many nations, warlike qualities were needed, and the recommendations of physical strength and courage were the highest of all. In more settled states of society and more civilized communities, gifts of mind are more prized than those of body. The qualities that are developed among nations are for the most part those which are demanded by the necessities of the times.

I. EXTRAORDINARY GIFTS OF BODY AND OF MIND ARE ALL FROM GOD. This is indeed true of all gifts. "We are his offspring." "In him we live, and move, and have our being." Yet how often is this truth forgotten in the presence of splendid endowments of strength and skill, genius and influence! Men take the praise to themselves for the powers which God has conferred, for the achievements which he has enabled them to accomplish. But it should ever be remembered that all human might is but a slight and evanescent glimmer of his glory.

II. EXTRAORDINARY GIFTS SHOULD BE EMPLOYED IN GOD'S SERVICE. There is a notion that high station and great genius absolve men from allegiance to the ordinary laws of morality and religion. What is regarded as proper for the multitude is sometimes deemed inapplicable to the exalted few. There can be no greater error. Great men have great power for good or for evil, and in their case it is pre-eminently of importance that the "five talents" should be employed in the service of the Divine Lord, who has a rightful claim to their consecration. "Spirits are not finely touched but to fine issues."

III. EXTRAORDINARY GIFTS MUST BE ACCOUNTED FOR TO THEIR GIVER. There is nothing in the fact of their unusual number or magnitude that absolves from that responsibility which characterizes all moral and accountable natures. The Divine Judge will doubtless require a strict account at last. There is no principle more prominent in Christian teaching than this: "To whom much is given, of them much will be required."

CONCLUSION. 1. Let those amply endowed with natural gifts beware of pride. There is nothing so unreasonable, nothing so spiritually disastrous, as is this sin. 2. Let such "great ones" remember to render to Heaven grateful acknowledgments, for to Heaven such acknowledgments are assuredly due. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Who hath made thee to differ?"—T.

Ver. 14.—*A great deliverance.* David, by the force of his character and the prowess of his arms, gathered around him many able, valiant men, who were a strength to himself and a protection to his kingdom. Of the thirty heroes most famous and mighty, some are recorded to have wrought great and memorable exploits. The passage before us relates a feat of arms performed probably by Shammah, one of these mighty men of valour. He attacked the Philistines, who were stationed in a field of barley or lentiles, routed and slew the enemy, and secured a victory for Israel. It is observable that, whilst the valour of the hero is celebrated, by which a defeat was turned into a victory, the result is ascribed to Jehovah, God of hosts: "The Lord saved them by a great deliverance." This deliverance may be regarded as symbolical of that yet greater salvation which our redeeming and merciful God has wrought on behalf, not of Israel only, but of mankind—a spiritual and everlasting deliverance.

I. THE LORD IS THE AUTHOR OF THIS SALVATION. 1. *His mind designed it.* The gospel is the good news of Divine compassion, and the expression of Divine wisdom. It bears the impress of his character. It witnesses to his attributes. It is his supreme word to the children of men. 2. *His Son achieved it.* The battle was fought when Jesus lived, was won when Jesus died. He is the Hero who girds his sword upon his thigh, and goes forth, conquering and to conquer. 3. *His Spirit applies it.* The deliverance has to be effected, not only for but in every ransomed and saved one who experiences the Saviour's interposition and shares his conquest.

II. THIS SALVATION IS GREAT, BEYOND ALL COMPARISON, BEYOND ALL PRAISE. 1. To understand the magnitude of the salvation, consider *from what the redeemed of the Lord are saved.* Israel had been saved from the bondage of Egypt, and in this book it appears they were repeatedly saved from the thralldom of the Philistines. From how

much worse a slavery—a captivity—are men redeemed by the grace of God our Saviour, which appeared in Christ! The gospel announces release from the bonds of sin and the yoke of Satan. 2. Consider *at what a cost we are redeemed*. “Not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” 3. Consider *the nature of the safety*—the salvation—which Christ secures for his people. It is not merely a deliverance from sin and death; it is a conferring of happiness, dignity, and joy; it is the impartation of the Divine favour, the bestowal of the Divine Spirit. 4. Consider *its final, eternal character*. It is a deliverance extending through time and into eternity, a salvation from which there is no return to bondage. 5. Consider *for how great a multitude it is obtained*. Many of all nations enjoy its benefits, and at last “a great multitude which no man can number” shall join in the everlasting anthem ascribing salvation to God and the Lamb.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. A great deliverance calls for *great gratitude* and great devotion from those who experience its blessings. 2. A great deliverance published is a *great opportunity* for the enslaved and oppressed. It is their privilege to accept the remission and the liberty proclaimed.—T.

Vers. 16-19.—The well of Bethlehem. This is one of the most touching and poetical incidents in the romantic life of the son of Jesse. It exhibits him in a light in which we cannot but discern both his amiability and his piety.

I. DAVID'S DESIRE. He was, with his faithful band of valiant followers, in the stronghold upon the borders of the Philistine territory. The enemy were in possession of his native vale, the scene of his boyish happiness and youthful exploits. It was a position of danger and of privation—this which he occupied at this time. How natural, how human, his desire for a draught of the bright, cool water from the spring that gushed from the hillside near his father's fields! It was a longing for home, it was a clinging to the associations of childhood, it was the unchanged heart, that prompted the desire that found utterance in his words, “Oh that one would give me,” etc.!

II. THE FEAT OF THE HEROES. The men David had around him were men ready for any daring exploit—bold, fearless, and prompt. Yet they had tender hearts, that could sympathize with such a wish as that their chief expressed. It was a gallant and heroic feat, this which they performed, in breaking through the ranks of the Philistines, and bringing to David the draught of water his soul desired from the dear well at Bethlehem.

III. THE SELF-SACRIFICING AND PIous ACT OF THE LEADER. David appreciated the faithfulness, the sympathy, the bravery, of the noble three. He could not drink the water, for it seemed to him like the life-blood of the heroes. It was too precious for any but for Jehovah. Accordingly he poured it out in a pious libation before the Lord, giving his best to God.

LESSONS. 1. The sacredness and beauty of human feeling. The associations of childhood and of home are precious, and it is no sign of weakness to cherish them. 2. The beauty of self-sacrifice. What more admirable than the willingness to run all risks to serve, to make happy, those whom we honour and love? 3. The supremacy of the Divine claims. God has a right to our hearts and to all that is dear to them. Withhold not from him his own.—T.

Vers. 1-8.—Popular and royal wisdom. All Israel now gave their adhesion to the person and house of David. The kingdom was knit together under one strong, wise leader (ver. 1). In the act by which the national acceptance of David was declared and ratified we have a suggestive instance of—

I. THE WISDOM OF THE COMMUNITY. All Israel: 1. Made their choice with discernment. The nation did not act precipitately, blindly, with a rash and ruinous impulsiveness. It had good reason for what it did. It elected to elevate David to the supreme post because (1) he could claim very close relationship: “We are thy bone and thy flesh;” a fact which ensured his deep interest and patriotism; (2) he had rendered valuable service in past days: “Thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel” (ver. 2); (3) Divine designation: “The Lord thy God said unto thee,” etc. (ver. 2);—three excellent reasons for their procedure. 2. Acted afterwards with wise precaution. Instead of trusting absolutely to the lasting virtue of a good man, they

bound him to royal fidelity with a solemn pledge: they met the king in Hebron, and "he made a covenant with them . . . before the Lord" (ver. 3). This was most wise; they did not then know for a certainty what manner of monarch David would prove. It would have been blind and foolish on their part, in the last degree, to have committed themselves absolutely and without any guarantee into the new king's hands. Here are lessons for all communities (nations, societies, Churches, etc.) for all time. (1) Think well before taking an important step which involves large issues. (2) Choose for a leader the man who is likely to cherish a real and living interest in the well-being of the community. (3) Prefer the man who has given assurance, by past action, of integrity and ability. (4) Make much of Divine indications. (5) Have a distinct understanding, carefully and solemnly ratified, before actually entering on the new relationship. Let there be no possible mistake on either side as to what is expected.

II. THE WISDOM OF THE KING. David did two wise things on this occasion. 1. He commenced his reign over united Israel by an act of courage and patriotism (vers. 4, 5). 2. He gave prominence and power to the man who earned them by his merit (ver. 6). Here are two lessons for leaders of all times. (1) Strive to start well. To make a favourable commencement of a ministry, or of a government or office of any kind, is not everything; but it is much. It is a great step toward a real success; therefore, in beginning a new work with new workers, put forth the utmost energy and start promisingly. (2) Show favour to the deserving. Let not kinship, nor friendship, nor the commendations of others, but personal merit shown in the face of duty and difficulty, be the condition of honour. Let the prize be to him who has won it. Partiality will soon destroy confidence and wear away affection. Impartiality will secure respect and love. Then as "David dwelt in the castle," will the wise leader of the community dwell in the stronghold of the esteem and affection of the Church or the community.—C.

Ver. 9.—*God's enlarging presence.* If God is with us in the sense in which he was "with" David, we also shall "wax greater and greater."

I. HOW GOD'S PRESENCE PROVED AN ENLARGEMENT TO THE KING. It resulted in: 1. An increase in his territory. God prospered him in war; his enemies were beaten; his dominion was enlarged, so much so that the prophecy of Gen. xv. 18-21 was fulfilled. 2. The growth of power and influence in his royal person. David became more and more established in the regard, the confidence, and the affection of Israel. The whole nation came to yield him a full and unhesitating allegiance. 3. The rise of national power and influence over neighbouring nations. The kingdom of Israel had been little or nothing to the surrounding peoples. Now, however, it acquired consideration. The potentates of the East were glad to make treaties, to be on amicable terms with it. 4. The enlargement of his spiritual nature. We cannot say that David's spiritual course was "the path of the just, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day." It certainly suffered temporary eclipse, even if it did not, after a certain period, steadily decline. But we may indulge the belief that, for some time after his elevation to supreme power, it was not only in circumstance but in soul that he "waxed greater and greater."

II. HOW GOD'S PRESENCE IS AN ENLARGEMENT TO OURSELVES. If God be with us, with his Divine favour, with his providing and protecting care, with his Spirit's influence, it may be that he will give us enlargement in the shape of: 1. Temporal prosperity. He may "set our feet in a large room" (1 Tim. iv. 8). We may be made by him to "wax greater and greater" (see 1 Tim. iv. 8). It is certain God will grant us increase in: 2. Our views. We shall see, know, understand, more and more of himself, of ourselves, of the meaning and the capacity of our human life, of his holy will as revealed in his Word. 3. Our affections. He will "enlarge our heart" (Ps. cxix. 32). We shall embrace more in our kindly sympathies. Our purer, nobler, more generous feeling will flow forth to all those who are the most necessitous—to the "little ones" of Christ, to "them that are afar off." 4. Our influence. We shall become more of a blessing to those with whom we have to do. As God teaches us, disciplines us, ennobles us, we shall have a gathering and growing power over our kindred, our associates, our neighbours. 5. Our hopes. These will be gradually withdrawn from the small circle of time, and reach forth into the vast amplitude of eternity; and they will

become ever higher and nobler as immortal life presents itself to us less as a mere endless enjoyment and more as a ceaseless service.—C.

Vers. 10—14, 20—47.—*The moral of the mighty men.* We may learn from this record of gallant exploits and of the names of David's mighty men—

I. THAT NO MAN, HOWEVER GREAT AND WISE, CAN DISPENSE WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF OTHERS. David's elevation to the throne was largely due to his own character and to his own deeds. That was noble and winning; these were great and worthy. But he could not and would not have become king over all Israel, had not these mighty men “strengthened themselves with him . . . to make him king” (ver. 10). And though the power and glory of his long reign were, to a great extent, the product of the king's own wisdom, valour, and loyalty to Jehovah, yet the deeds of his mighty men had much to do with the triumphs he won and the power he wielded. No Christian leader can accomplish great things without an active following on the part of brave and true men, who “strengthen themselves with him.” Around the illustrious men whose names are household words and who wrought great things for Christ and for the world, there were gathered others, less in moral and spiritual stature than they, whose names were unwritten or have faded from view, but whose co-operation ensured success. All who would accomplish much must know how to surround themselves with others who will second their work and sustain their hands.

II. THAT MEN MAY SERVE A GOOD CAUSE ANIMATED BY VARIOUS MOTIVES. It is impossible to suppose that all those who “strengthened themselves with David . . . according to the word of the Lord” (ver. 10) took their part, then and afterwards, solely on the ground that they were thus carrying out the Divine will. Doubtless they had their personal ambitions. The court at Jerusalem was not without its rivalries and jealousies. The mighty men were no doubt stirred to more daring deeds because they hoped to “have a name among the three” (vers. 20, 24), if not the “first three” (ver. 21); or among “the thirty” (ver. 25), if not the three; or to be counted among “the valiant men of the armies” (ver. 26). In our Christian warfare we should be actuated by the very highest considerations—by the love of Christ and the love of man. We may also be affected, may let our zeal burn more steadily and brightly, by considerations less lofty than these—by the desire to gain the approval of our leaders, by the hope of a large reward, etc.

III. THAT MEN MAY DEDICATE THEIR PHYSICAL PROWESS TO THE SERVICE OF GOD AND OF THEIR KIND. The worthies whose deeds are here recorded were rendering a not unimportant service to their race. The reign of David had a certain serious bearing on the whole plan of Providence. It was, perhaps, an essential link in the whole redemptive chain. In this light the exploits of these heroes, who helped to place David in regal power and to sustain him on the throne of Israel, formed a contribution to the work of God and the redemption of man. The tendency of our nature is to over-estimate such brilliant feats as those of this chapter (vers. 11—14, 20, 22, 23). But it is possible, by a reaction of thought, to under-estimate them, and even to deny them a place in the account of honourable service. Physical prowess has served and yet may serve the cause of truth, righteousness, wisdom.

IV. THAT USUALLY IN OTHER WAYS THAN THESE GOD ASKS AND ACCEPTS OUR SERVICE. Now, in these Christian times, it is (1) by moral rather than by physical courage; (2) in obscurity rather than in distinction; (3) with the sword of the Spirit rather than with the sword of steel, that we are to win victories and render service to our Lord.—C.

Vers. 15—19.—*A royal afterthought.* This is a beautiful and touching episode in the military career of David. It brings out both the weakness and the strength of the Hebrew monarch.

I. THE KING'S MOMENTARY INCONSIDERATENESS. (Ver. 17.) David was not by any means thoughtless of his subjects. He was not made of the hard material of which some celebrated adventurers have been composed, which made them utterly heedless of the losses and sufferings of their followers. He had a warm and generous heart. But on this occasion he was betrayed into an inconsiderate act. When his thirst could not possibly be allayed without placing the lives of his men in the most imminent risk, h

should have borne it in silence rather than have uttered his wish for water. He should have remembered that the wish of a sovereign would probably be interpreted as a command, or be seized upon as an occasion for distinction or a means of securing a large reward. To such default all men are liable. It requires unceasing prayer and sleepless vigilance to avoid being surprised and "overtaken in a fault."

II. THE DEVOTED LOYALTY OF HIS FOLLOWERS. (Ver. 18.) Three of his mighty men no sooner heard his utterance of strong desire than they set out to gratify it. Daring the utmost danger, their life in their hand, they "brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well." David had the rare faculty of attaching men to himself with enthusiastic devotion. He won, not only the fidelity, but the eager and loving devotion of his servants. Surely his "greater Son," the Prince of Peace, is far more worthy of the unhesitating, uncalculating devotion of his subjects. Surely they should eagerly watch his eye, should spring to do his bidding, should joyfully run greatest risks and make largest sacrifices to fulfil the good pleasure of his will.

III. THE REDEEMING AFTERTHOUGHT. (Vers. 18, 19.) 1. David disallowed his own selfishness. It is our habit to cover our wrong deeds with plausible pretexts. Our ingenuity is generally equal to the discovery of reasons which will extenuate or justify our errors and our sins. David might have done the same had he been less worthy than he was. But he took the nobler course. He rebuked himself and disallowed his deed. He shrank from the act of profiting by his own inconsiderateness. God forbid . . . shall I drink the blood of these men," etc.? Well would it have been for this oppressed world of ours if its kings and rulers had always shrunk thus from "drinking the blood" of the people. In itself it is doubtless better not to err than to err and afterwards to withdraw, but it is difficult for us not to be glad that David was guilty of this momentary thoughtlessness, inasmuch as it was directly followed by this noble and most honourable afterthought, that he would not gratify his taste through an act which had imperilled the lives of his followers. It was the readiest and most practical way of rebuking himself. 2. He rose into the region of self-denial and devotion. He "poured it out to the Lord." He made it quite impossible for him to drink, and, at the same time, he offered an oblation unto the Lord. Seldom does so unpromising a commencement issue in so excellent an ending. But for the profoundly religious character of David, it would not have done so. We learn that: (1) Deep-seated principles of piety and virtue should correct a mistake into which we may be surprised. (2) That self-denial and devotion are truer triumphs than military conquests. We do not think much of Jashobeam's exploit (ver. 11), but we shall never forget this penitential, self-sacrificing deed of David.—C.

Vers. 1—3.—*The promise fulfilled.* "They anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the Lord by Samuel." David had a great promise given him. It was given him early in his life to inspire the noble purpose, and to make possible the necessary patience. You and I have great promises, given us, not when in sight of the longed-for good, but when it is yet distant and far away. Such promises are our morning stars, as they were David's. Often, however, to David the fulfilment of its promise seemed an impossibility. Often to us the obstacles to the fulfilment of our promises seem many and insuperable. It is worth while to linger and to observe how calmly and straight God's providence marched onward to the fulfilment of its promise in his case, and to gather thence some deepening of our confidence that it will march straight on to the complete fulfilment of every word on which he has caused us to hope. I confine myself to this one point, not dwelling on some important points likewise suggested here. Others may mark this to indicate the fact that ultimately *the people are the source of all power* in the state; or may single out the word "covenant" here, and dwell on the fact that David is the first example in history of a constitutional monarchy. We look above and beyond these things, to a Divine Giver fulfilling a long-despaired-of promise. That the precedent may have all its weight of consolation for the despairing inheritors of God's promises, let us mark successively—(1) *The seeming impossibility of this promise being fulfilled*; and (2) *its blessed and complete fulfilment*.

I. OBSERVE THE SEEING IMPOSSIBILITY OF DAVID'S PROMISE BEING FULFILLED. Not many arguments are usually needed to drive us to despair. Many of us when all is brightest cannot believe the good word spoken to us. How much more David might

have concluded that the fulfilment of this promise was utterly outside the reach of all possibility! Look at the arguments of despair with which Satan could assail him. 1. *There was already a monarch established in his throne.* The choice of the whole people. And at the time the promise was made to David everything indicated he was the worthy choice of Israel. He had the hold which popular election, Divine approval, a generous disposition, great physical courage and prowess, great natural kingliness, conspired to give him. Nor had he any lack of heirs. There were three conspicuous sons—Jonathan, Abinadab, Melchi-shua, all worthy to succeed him. One of them, by his noble generosity and kindness, which blended with the noblest martial qualities, made him the darling and pride of the nation. There were other sons and grandsons. How was it possible that all these should be superseded and he made king? Especially impossible would this seem when he remembered that: 2. *He did not belong to a tribe whose rulership would be acceptable to Israel*, and did not even belong to the chief family of that tribe. Ephraim aspired to be the leading tribe of Israel. Her land centrally situate, she had been, from the days of Joseph downward, the leading tribe. They might as their first king accept a man of Benjamin, not caring to press their claims when they were securing one from a tribe always in friendliest alliance with their own, and too small to dream of rivalling them in importance. But would Ephraim even admit Judah her rival to give Israel a king? And even if they were willing, would the great families of Judah accept that of Jesse as the royal house, when the family of Caleb was still found in Hebron? Yea, if they were willing, would his own family be? There were his brothers, great in warlike force; the eldest sufficiently kingly for Samuel to deem him the chosen of the Lord. There was his uncle Joab, probably no older than himself, and his brothers, all of them capable of ambition. Why should he be the one? Did his pride or legitimate complacency venture to go back to the great day at Ephes-dammim when he slew Goliath? There was Eleazar, who in the same conflict had supported David and won a great renown, and Jashobeam, who “slew three hundred at one time,” and half a score of others who had done deeds of romantic fame. So that even before the enmity of Saul broke out there was enough to make David despair of his ever seeing the promise fulfilled. Then next: 3. *Saul with all his forces sets himself to destroy David.* The insanity that overtook Saul seemed to leave David no hope. The enmity so persistent; the whole soldiery of the kingdom available and employed to seize and destroy him; the land a little land—not much larger than Yorkshire;—what chance was there of surviving such a pursuit? The only defenders he could find were the rabble of outlawed people or men of broken character and fortunes, who could not lose by any change, but possibly might gain. Should he meet Saul in battle, his name would have a stigma of rebellion fatal to all kingly hopes. Should he avoid a battle, it was hard to see by what other means he could avoid the certain fate which seemed awaiting him. And when year after year this lasted, and David was “hunted like a partridge on the mountains,” how inevitably would all hope of the fulfilment of God’s promise fade from his soul! And yet the greatest difficulty of all remains to be noted. At last he cuts the knot of suspense, and, giving up all hope of the crown, he seeks to secure his life, and actually: 4. *He enlists in the service of the enemies of Israel.* We know not with what reservations he enters the service of Achish, whether he had intended the treason of fighting against Israel, or the treason of siding with Israel against the Philistines after receiving their hospitality and pledging faithfulness to them. Despair was working its usual folly and recklessness; and he had put himself in one of those false positions which are above all things to be avoided. And doing so, he not only abandoned for ever all thought of being king, but seemed to make the throne impossible. But even here God steps in, and, by raising up opposition on the part of the lords of the Philistines, saves him from the shame which would have dishonoured him whether he had fought against Israel or Israel’s enemies. But put all these together: the settledness of the dynasty of Saul; the disadvantages of David’s birth; the persecutions of Saul; his own break-down in faith;—and would you in his circumstances have been ever able to hope for the fulfilment of this great promise? Would you not rather have looked back on it as the dream of a friendly nature and as nothing more? Are there more impediments to-day in the way of God’s promise to you being fulfilled than studded the way to the fulfilment of these? Yet observe, spite of all these impossibilities—

II. THE COMPLETE AND BLESSED FULFILMENT OF ALL GOD'S PROMISES. Consider how many things go to this. 1. There is the opportunity for making himself known to all Israel. 2. Then, by marvellous providential deliverances and by restraints on the heart of Saul, every effort to destroy David is frustrate. 3. Then, God saves him from himself, from the complications of his own despair, by keeping him entirely out of the war between Saul and the Philistines. 4. Then, Saul and his three sons fall together at Gilboa, and the only son of Saul remaining is one without any of the strength requisite for kingship. The house of Judah accepts him as the ruler fittest to secure them from the Philistines, one whose very name is itself worth an army. And Benjamin, nearest to the Philistines, is glad to do the same. Then, while the conflict with Ishbosheth has the minimum of slaughter that could be found in civil war, it daily made the eminence of David more conspicuous. And so it happens that, without any effort, toil, or solicitude on God's part, all things are brought round so perfectly that at last all the tribes of Israel come and invite him to be king. And that *at the right time*, viz. as soon as he was fit for such a post. He reached it and held it forty years in the richest manner; his kingdom reaching dimensions and prosperity hitherto never dreamed of, and being transmitted to a long line of descendants, seventeen generations holding the throne before the Captivity broke the line. And even so, what is impossible with man ever proves to be possible with God. And the promise made to you—of pardon of your repented sins, or of grace to conquer indwelling evil, or of answer to your prayer, or of perseverance to the end, or of daily bread, or of help in every time of trouble—however impossible its fulfilment may seem, will be perfectly, easily, richly fulfilled by him whose love and power know none of the limits within which we have to work.—G.

Ver. 10—ch. xii. 40.—*The groups of heroes.* “These are the chief of the mighty men whom David had.” This roll of ancient chivalry is worthy of a little notice. Men of valour consecrating that valour to service of David and their country, emulating each other's deeds and all abounding in service to their land, their numbers, association, prowess, has charmed many a reader and inspired through many generations a grand succession of heroic souls. As courage is a constant requisite in all directions, let us study this singular group of valiant men, and observe how—

I. HEROES COLLECT ABOUT A HERO. There are few qualities which are not more or less contagious. Corruption corrupts, and strength invigorates others. Honour sets its fashion, and vice finds many to copy it. The bad man has to answer, not only for the harm he does, but for the harm that he leads others to do. The good man has the reward of his service, which is great, but of his example as well, which is greater still. Here we see that one hero makes a multitude. After one man has fought and slain a gigantic foe, Benaiah can do the same. And Jashobeam and Eleazar can do their marvellous deeds, slaying foes by hundreds who come against them. The nobility of David's nature attracts and elevates kindred spirits. *It attracts them*; for even when an outcast and exile, they collect about him (see ch. xii.) in the cave of Adullam and in the land of the Philistines. All Saul's authority as king and kinsman does not prevent many of the bravest of the Benjamites attaching themselves to David, even in Saul's lifetime. A Moabite, and an Ammonite were among his chief captains; a Hittite, one of his thirty knights; from beyond Jordan many gather to him; and later on, from every tribe of Israel some are attracted to his standard. There is such an attraction about every great soul. The law of gravitation, I suppose, is true of souls, that they attract each other in the ratio of their masses; and if a nature be tenfold grander than another, it has tenfold more attraction. Great men cannot help attracting, and men less great from feeling the force of that attraction. And when the greatness is the rounded greatness in which generosity of nature meets with courage and with wisdom, there is no bound to the attraction exercised and the devotion yielded. If God has made you a kingly spirit, you need not be over-solicitous about the recognition of your claims. He whom God makes to be master is master by a law of gravitation, and finds his level as naturally as material things find theirs. Impatience to reach your throne only delays it. *Be still*, and if God means you to rule, there is nothing more certain than that you will. Meanwhile, as perhaps you have not that part to play, attach yourself as a learner and a follower to him whom you

find better and wiser than yourself, and, sitting at his feet, you will, in the practice of obedience, learn the secret of command. David not only attracts, however, but *elevates* Beneath the kindling inspiration of his valour all hearts grow brave. Courage seems so easy and fear so shameful that, with him as leader, each man is twice, ay, sometimes many times himself. A Bruce, a Cromwell, a Nelson, or a Wellington, will never lack brave following. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so does a man the countenance of his friend." Valour in one makes many valiant. King Arthur had his knights of the Round Table, and David had his, and all brave men have theirs. Such a fact is worthy of notice, for we are apt to think evil a stronger thing than good; the fact being that good is the most omnipotent thing on earth, kindling similar goodness in others' lives. Be brave and good, and you will not long be without companions.

II. **A WISE KING CHOOSES BRAVE MEN FOR CAPTAINS.** He did so because he recognized the validity of the principle we have just been considering. His valour infused into the captains; theirs would be infused into the men. In war an army wants brave leaders, not figure-heads. "Take the kings away every man out of his place, and put captains in their room," said the sensible military critics of Berhadad, who had made his first invasion of Israel with thirty-two kings as leaders of his troops. But it is not only in military matters, but in all others that courage is wanted. From the teacher of a Sunday school to a prime minister, from a minister of religion to a town councillor, whoever is at the head of his fellows should be brave; wise as well, but brave. Prudence without some daring and enterprise will so shrink from difficulties and risks that it will take oftentimes the most dangerous course of all—doing nothing. There is always at hand, available for whoever can use it, abundance of power to work reforms, to render needed service to mankind, if only there be leaders for it. Are you in a position of influence of any sort, in Church or state, with few or many? Remember that David would have none but heroic men for leaders, and if you have not courage to lead men forward, you should give place to those who have. Happy the village Church, the Sunday school, the school board, the town council, the land, whose leaders have brave hearts that do not slacken with languor or shrink from danger! With such leading, the community, like Israel, will find safety, prosperity, blessing, in richer measure than languid hearts ever dare to dream of.—G.

Ver. 22.—"Benaiah the son of Jehoiada." "Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done many acts; he slew two lionlike men of Moab: also he went down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day. And he slew an Egyptian, a man of great stature, five cubits high; and in the Egyptian's hand was a spear like a weaver's beam; and he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear." I venture to treat of this hero, although far removed from any nineteenth-century characteristics. He was a *priest*, son of a high priest, yet a warrior. To find one like him in office and quality one has to go back to the fighting bishops of the Middle Ages. We do not read of his ministering at the altar. Yet we must not, therefore, imagine him some degenerate son of Aaron, affording warning rather than example. For there is something savoury in his brief story, which occurs twice in the Bible, and just because of its unusual combinations of characteristics it is worth our lingering on it. Let me urge some simple lessons which may be of use, at least to the more combative of our readers. Observe—

I. **THAT MANLINESS IS A GREAT DESIDERATUM IN A PRIESTHOOD.** To make a true priest of God, the first and greatest thing required is godliness, and the second is like unto it—manliness; and on these two qualities hang all effective discharge of priestly duties. It may be objected that this remark does not necessarily spring from Benaiah, who, though of the tribe of Levi, might be an exception to rather than a specimen of the priestly order. And I should admit the relevancy of the remark were it not that the tribe of Levi seems, in Egypt, to have been conspicuous for its courage and leading qualities (for otherwise the eminence of Aaron before Moses received his commission would be inexplicable); that the tribe of Levi was called pre-eminently "*the host*," during all the encampments in the wilderness; that in David's time the tribe of Levi seems to have afforded one of the monthly army corps of twenty-four thousand men (ch. xxvii. 5); that from the days of Phinehas to those of the Maccabees, and even later, the priesthood furnished many of Israel's noblest warriors; so that, without

pressing or straining anything, we have the fact clear that the manliness of the tribe of the Levites was one reason of its selection for the priesthood, or at least one characteristic of it. There is a vulgar manliness, loud, blatant, coarse, unfamiliar with any of the finer questionings or feelings of the soul. Far from all priestly work be such. But the noblest manliness is not coarse. It blends gentleness with courage, is a thing of force of spirit rather than of bodily strength, marked by vigour and truth, daring rather than any braggart delight in blows. And it should be remembered that weak and feeble spirits are nowhere more out of place than in the Christian ministry. To make a true minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ you want essentially, as the raw material out of which God makes him—*manliness*. Courage to avow the faith when all may be denying it; to stand alone; to resist all seduction to smother doubt and to repeat hearsay; to dare to do right; to have the inspiring power which nerves others to dare it as well; to rebuke; to warn; to count and accept the cost of faithfulness to principles; to be a leader and commander to the people;—for these things is manliness not needed? Is courage not supremely requisite? Peter said, “Add to your faith *manliness*” (“*virtus*” in the Latin sense, not in the English). Christ said of Peter, “Thou art a *rock*, and on this rock I will build my Church.” In Heb. xi. you could almost substitute the word “courage” for the word “faith,” so constantly and inseparably are they united. The great names of the Church are no less illustrious for courage than for spiritual insight. Paul, Athanasius standing “alone against the world,” Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, Carey, Williams, Livingstone; you have just to go over the great names of the Church’s history to see that the names of those greatly good have been those pre-eminently of men greatly *brave* as well. Whatever your work, Christian, if you would be a true priest of God you must be brave. “Put on thy *strength*, O Zion.” Religion never enervates when it is the real thing, but uses and increases all the braver qualities of the spirit. Faith is a fight in all directions. We have sometimes fostered a piety too sentimental, phrasy, and self-conscious. From the manliness which God approved in the old priesthood, and which Benaiah had in prime fulness, learn that godliness and manliness should meet to make a thorough character. Observe (what, indeed, flows from this)—

II. THAT THE COMBATIVE QUALITY IN MAN, WHILE IT NEEDS HALLOWING, ADMITS OF IT. Man is very largely a fighting animal. His modes of attack come almost as instinctively as the various modes of assault used by the lower animals. The taste for conflict distinguishing all men, true religion does not destroy, but seeks to hallow it. The mental analyst will tell you that he needs some admixture of the combative element to produce some of the finest qualities of nature. It is that which gives hardness and a staying power to the man. There is no decision of character without it. We need the power of standing up against our enemies to stand up against ourselves. There is no pertinacity of purpose without it. He who has not a little of the combative element soon gives in. There is no conquest of difficulties without it. We shrink from every trouble, say a lion is in the street, if there is nothing of this quality in us. So that the combative quality is not one of nature’s mistakes that grace has just to weed out, but something it has to hallow; an edged tool, in learning the uses of which we often cut our fingers, but something not on that account to be thrown away. It may be hallowed, but it needs a good deal of effort to secure a thorough hallowing of it. It is apt to be a reckless quality, striking wildly; the weapon of the passions rather than of the reason; used by and intensifying animosity; the source of strife and confusion, and the “every evil work” which attend them—shedding blood, devastating kingdoms, burdening conscience with guilt, running riotous in its wrong. When rightly used, one of the grandest blessings of life; when ill used, one of its great curses. If so valuable hallowed, so mischievous unhallowed, the question rises—When is it hallowed, and truly and divinely used? And I think Benaiah’s case gives us, somewhat roughly, perhaps, but clearly, the true answer to the question. It is used rightly and hallowed when directed against the enemies of the public good. Sometimes against an Egyptian host mustered to battle, sometimes against the Moabites, and sometimes against the wild beasts. An evangelical generalization might not be far out of it which stated it that the combative element is wisely employed when it operates against whatever injures our own character or our neighbour’s well-being. The man fights foolishly who does not begin the conflict by fighting with himself. It were vain

to fight against Egyptians and Moabites, and then give in and let some lion destroy the power so valuable—power which might have done such splendid service. To say “*No*” to our own weaknesses, to protect the interests of others, to oppose whatever by its falsehood, sin, or mischief threatens the true well-being of our friends and neighbours. Oh, how much there is that needs fighting! how much of evil in our own hearts! how much in the world! How much of evil is daily assailing and destroying the happiness and well-being of multitudes, but for want of brave hearts that think of more than merely getting to heaven themselves, and that are willing to make some sacrifice of comfort and ease and to risk what is dearer than either! “Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life;” and oppose whatever harms your brethren.

III. THAT THERE ARE A GOOD MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF ENEMIES TO BE TACKLED IN THE COURSE OF OUR LIFE. Sometimes Egyptians; sometimes Moabites; sometimes lions; sometimes some other foe, like the Philistines encamped round Bethlehem, through whom Benaiah and two others broke to fetch David a draught of water from its well. Yes; there is more than one or two or even three sorts of enemies against which we have here to fight. Now it is a subtle whisper that denies there is any Providence here or heaven hereafter; now it is some passion that, rising up within us, clamours for mastery over the reason and duty; now it is greed, which makes the fingers stick to the money they should part with; now it is one of what are called the minor faults, but which yet are capable of inflicting much pain and injury that needs to be put down; now it is the ignorance of the children of the people; now it is their vices, their drunkenness; now it is the system which is permitted to increase the wealth of individuals at the expense of corrupting the life of the people. Oh for a few *Benaials*, that in conflict with such evils will put forth a noble strength. Let us not live a *merely private life*. Rise and assail the foe which is injuring society, beginning, I must say again, with the enemies that fight in your own heart—unbelief in Christ, unwillingness to follow him, indulgence of your own weakness. There are too many Reubens in every age who, when great issues are being fought out big with bliss or woe to generations, “abide” ignobly “among the bleating of the sheep.” Keener interest in all efforts of philanthropy and politics to further human well-being, is what is required at our hand. Lastly, observe that—

IV. IN ALL FIGHTING, THE SOUL IS THE MAIN THING. Doubtless Benaiah had great muscular strength, but that was but a little of his equipment. The splendid audacity that engaged with the Egyptian, meaning to kill him with his own spear. The fine superiority to thought of consequences to himself of engaging with that hungry lion on a winter’s day, in close quarters, where neither could escape the other. It was that *brave spirit* in him which, never shrinking from attempts that seemed impossible, nor kept back by the discretion that seeks to save its skin, wrought its grand marvels. Oh, how little of this grand courage marks us! How much solicitude we have about our name, our peace, what people may think of us, our money, the chance of failing! In this world the timid don’t always go most safely. It is the brave heart that comes best out of all its conflicts. Pluck up a little strength, and call to God for more, and venture bravely wherever duty calls you, and, like Benaiah, you will find fame, safety, usefulness, attendant on your steps.—G.

Vers. 1—4.—*David’s anointing.* This chapter properly follows the twelfth chapter. The union of heart to make David king is taken up at the commencement of this eleventh chapter. This event happened on the death of Ishboseth (see 2 Sam. v. 1—3). The repeated anointings in the presence of the heads of the kingdom seem to have been necessary to the general acknowledgment of the sovereign by the nation. In David we are to see Christ. In the “oneness of heart” to make him king (see ch. xii. 38), we see that love to Christ which constitutes all true subjects of the Saviour. It was simply love to *himself* which drew all these heroes around David. At his yearning for the water of the well of Bethlehem, it was this love that made them brave all danger, and, at the risk of their lives, “break through the host of the Philistines.” In all this we see the personal love of the Lord’s people to their King, Jesus. Love is the mighty bond—love to himself, love that will brave all dangers, love that will lay down its life for him—the reflection of his own shed abroad in their hearts. And the object of this great gathering was one, even as their hearts were one,

viz. to make David king. Thus is it also the one desire of all the followers of Christ—that he shall be King. They would cast every crown at his feet and say, “Thou art worthy,” and they long for the time when he shall be “King of kings and Lord of lords.” But while they were “of one heart” to make David king, he, on his part, made a covenant with them. In this covenant he made himself over to them as their leader and captain, and that they should partake of the reward of his victories and of his glory. All this would be included in that covenant. In this, again, we see Christ, our true David, engaging to his faithful people all covenant blessings. “I will give unto you the sure mercies of David.” His own wondrous love has bound them to himself, and that same love ensures to them, in a covenant that nothing can set aside, every spiritual and temporal blessing. “He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”—W.

Vers. 4—9.—*Capture of Jerusalem.* David and all Israel with him went to Jerusalem, then called Jebus, and in the possession of the Jebusites. But they would have none of him. David, however, took the castle of Zion, and Joab subsequently captured the city, and was rewarded for his bravery by promotion to the chief military rank. We have seen the anointed king and his subjects, and now we are presented to the royal residence. In all this Christ is again shadowed forth. We have seen the anointed King Jesus and those who are his faithful ones. He has gone into “the far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return;” and his people shall share in his glory when he shall return. “I go,” he said, “to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” He has purchased Zion for his loved ones with his own precious blood, and they shall reign with him in his glory.—W.

Vers. 10—25.—*David's mighty men.* Among the elders of Israel (ver. 3) who came to anoint David king, there were mighty men of valour, who had in various ways distinguished themselves. These are referred to in these verses, and also in 2 Sam. xxiii. 8—24. David formed a military staff out of this “great host” that had gathered around him. The “mighty men,” or “champions,” of this staff were divided into three classes. The highest was Jashobeam, the son of Hachmoni; the second, Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite; the third, Shammah the son of Agee, the Hararite. These were of the first class or highest rank. In the second class were first Abishai the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah; the second, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; the third, Asahel the brother of Joab. These were of the second rank. The third class were the thirty men enumerated in these chapters, of whom Asahel was the chief. There are thirty-one mentioned in the list, including Asahel, which, including the six of the two superior ranks, make thirty-seven. The first name in the chief rank, Jashobeam, was an office, or “seat” (2 Sam. xxiii. 8). Adino the Ezrite is said to have filled this office under Joab. The one who filled this seat was president of war. The three chief men who composed the ranks of each of the first two classes were chosen for their valour, and the remarkable manner in which they had distinguished themselves at the time when David was Saul's general against the Philistines. The two chapters give in detail the account of the exploits performed by Jashobeam, Eleazar, Shammah, Abishai, Benaiah, and Asahel. These were the men who had so distinguished themselves under David when acting as Saul's general. Adino the Ezrite is represented as sitting in Jashobeam's seat—probably acting for him as the president of the council of war. Jashobeam is said to have slain eight hundred men with “his own spear.” The Philistines gathered together against David in a field of barley, or lentiles. There Eleazar met them, and fought “till his hand was weary,” and it “clave unto the sword.” The same battle was continued by Shammah after the exhaustion of Eleazar, and he, by his valour, preserved the field. To these two the Lord gave a great victory, and “the people returned after them only to spoil.” These were the exploits of the three chief men of David's first rank. In his second rank, Abishai the brother of Joab slew with his own spear three hundred men. Benaiah the son of Jehoiada slew at one time two Moabitish giants; at another time, when snow covered the ground, he slew a lion in a pit; and at another an Egyptian giant with his own spear. Asahel, the third of the second rank, and brother also of

Joab, is merely described as one of the valiant men. This "great host" had gathered to David in the cave of Adullam, situate within a few miles of Bethlehem. Drawn thither by personal attachment to himself, they preferred rejection and danger and every hardship of life. Let us learn a few spiritual lessons from this narrative. All those who are drawn around the true David, the Lord Jesus, are not only Christians but warriors. They are to be heroes in the Lord's service—to "fight the good fight of faith." And as with these "mighty men," according to their individual prowess will they be rewarded in the day of the true David's glory. Many of the noble acts of valour which distinguished these "mighty men" were done in secret, and on their own special ground, never heard of till now, and on this account were they chosen as David's "mighty men" now. Those who are fit to fight the Lord's battles in *public* are those who have conquered in *secret*, on their own *home* ground, and where no eye has seen but God's. The man who knows not, like David himself, what it is to have killed the "lion and the bear" *in secret* is not fit to stand in the public arena to contend with Goliath of Gath. Here we have the election of David to the throne by God, even while Saul was reigning. Just so is it now. The prince of this world reigns, but Jesus is God's chosen One. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed. . . . Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." The *anointing* of David by God is brought before us in 1 Sam. xvi. 12, 13. The election and anointing of David by *the people* is recorded in the chapter we are now considering. In these two passages we have the election of Jesus and his anointing *by God* shadowed forth in those of David, even while as yet the world's king was reigning. In the mean time David, thus chosen and anointed of God, is rejected and cast out by the people of God and by the Gentiles. This is shadowed forth in the rejection by Saul and by Achish, King of Gath (1 Sam. xxi. 10—15). Thus Jesus, the Chosen and Anointed of God, has been rejected by Jews and Gentiles. "Away with him!" "Crucify him!" was the united cry of both. The rejected king David takes refuge in the cave of Adullam, and there "a great host as the host of God" gather round him, drawn to him by devoted love, and preferring to be identified with him in his rejection than to be in honour under Saul. How fully we see Christ in all this! As the rejected One, Jesus is now hiding from the view of the world, like David in the cave of Adullam. He has ascended on high, as the Chosen and Anointed of God. He is King, "set upon his holy hill of Zion." And now "a great host, as the host of God," is being gathered out of this world, "a multitude which no man can number," drawn around this rejected One—drawn by his love, and preferring rejection with him to "enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season." The prince of this world is ruling still; but though in the world, his people are not of the world. Saul is not their king, but David; not Satan, but Jesus. "He is precious" to them—the "chief of ten thousand, the altogether lovely." And just as there was great joy in this outgathered host of David (ch. xii. 40), so there is joy among the people of God. Jesus is their joy. He is coming to reign. They know it. And the joy which David's outgathered ones had in him was indeed only a faint shadow of that joy which is theirs, for they have "his joy fulfilled in themselves." And what was the character of those who were drawn to David as the rejected one in the cave of Adullam? "And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was bitter of soul, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them." Could any passage more accurately describe those who flocked round the standard of the Lord Jesus when on earth? "Publicans and harlots, sinners," those out of whom had been cast seven devils, the broken in heart, the outcast, the blind and deaf and dumb, the naked and hungry and wretched,—such were those who were drawn to the true David when on earth—drawn by his love, and, with his love constraining them, content to "count all things as dung that they might win Christ, and be found in him." And such are they still who are drawn to the world's rejected One. They are in "*distress*"—they have nothing, and are full of want. Wearied with the mockery of a world that has ever cheated them, they have cast themselves, weary and heavy laden, on Jesus. Again and again they have uttered the cry, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." They are "*in debt*"—debtors to a broken Law, with the sword of Divine wrath hanging over

their heads on account of guilt and sin. They are “bitter of soul;” for sin has wounded them, the world has wounded them, Satan has pierced them through and through. They had “no hope, and were without God in the world.” They were “hateful and hating one another.” They were “dead in trespasses and sins.” Drawn to Jesus by his love, he is now their “All in all.” He has risen from the dead and has ascended on high. He has “become a Captain over them”—the “Captain of their salvation, made perfect through sufferings.” The host thus gathering round the true David is indeed “the host of God.” It is increasing and shall increase till it becomes “a multitude that no man can number,” which shall come with Jesus when he shall return in glory, and shall reign with him, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” There is one very precious word in this narrative, “And David went on going and growing: for the Lord of hosts was with him” (see margin, 2 Sam. v. 10, and ver. 9 of this chapter). What a word for each of us—“going and growing”! Yes; they are inseparable! In your “walk” with God you must “grow.” Oh, how many are *in the way* to heaven, but standing still! Reader, are you growing? Are you “walking” with God? then you *must* grow; but not otherwise. Less each day in your own eyes, but more in his. Growth in grace is a *going down*—a reversal—to ourselves. Christ’s glory so rises till the soul is lost in it. “Going and growing”! And what was the secret of it? Not David’s natural prowess; not the numbers who were daily flocking to his standard. No; none of these: “for the Lord of hosts was with him.” Yes; God’s presence—abiding in Jesus—is the secret of all “going” and the secret of all “growing.” None without it.—W.

Vers. 1—3.—God’s providences fulfil God’s promises. The fact is brought prominently before us in these verses that eventually, after long waiting and much trial of faith and patience, the promised throne was secured for David, and that in a most hopeful way, by the good will of the people and the providential removal of all possible rivals. It has been said that “They who wait on providence will never want a providence on which to wait.” But we must guard against making providence something operating distinct from God. It is really the *living God* working in the sphere of material things for the highest good of his people.

I. GOD’S PROMISE OF THE THRONE TO DAVID. It had been made long years before, when David was but a youth (1 Sam. xvi. 13). It was made by the significant act of anointment, and by the inward witness of God’s Spirit. But it was not accompanied with any assurance of immediate fulfilment. God’s promises still may serve for years unto the culture of our dependence and trust, until he finds the fitting time for their realization. The Christian man now has the promise of the “inheritance undefiled,” but only the promise; yet to him “faith is the substance of things hoped for.”

II. WHEN THE PROMISE WAS GIVEN THE FULFILMENT SEEMED MOST UNLIKELY. Another king was actually seated on the throne. There were no outward signs of weakness in his rule; no perilous dissatisfactions among the people; and he was a strong, hale man, and likely to live and rule for many years. Moreover, this King Saul had a family, and, in the natural order of things, it would be expected that they should succeed him on the throne. And, as time advanced, Saul’s enmity against David could not fail to create such party feeling as would greatly hinder, if not absolutely prevent, his ever securing the full allegiance of the nation. Taking these things fully into account, any one, looking on from his youth-time to David’s future, would say that it was of all possible things the most unlikely that he should ever occupy the royal throne. But one has skilfully said that “the unexpected is the thing that happens,” and the seemingly impossible often becomes the fact. A man who holds fast God’s promises need never be troubled by disadvantageous appearances. Following the Divine lead, a man’s way unfolds step by step.

III. THOUGH HE HELD FAST THE PROMISE, DAVID NEVER FORCED ITS FULFILMENT; herein setting us a most noble and pious example. He never tried to make a national party; he never pressed himself into high court positions; he never resisted the enmity of Saul; when his enemy was actually in his power, and a spear-thrust appeared to be the step on to the throne, he would not take matters into his own hands (1 Sam. xxvi. 9—11). And even when Saul was dead, David did not press forward or attempt to

seize the full kingdom. It may be urged that this was good *policy*, but it was really something far deeper—it was that true *piety*, which finds its best expression in waiting on God and waiting for him. A common Christian sin is saying we trust God, yet taking life into our own hands.

IV. GOD MAKES HIS PROVIDENCES EVENTUALLY WORK OUT HIS PROMISES. We may conceive of all things and all events as under his control; and the hearts of all men are in his hands. He is the Divine Master of all man's wilfulnesses. The long ages are his to work in. He can not only use forces, but fit forces together, and compel them to serve his ends. Perhaps the greatest marvel of human life is the way in which *things unfold*, and seemingly impossible issues are reached. In St. Paul's thought, "All things work together for good." Full illustration is found in the events which led David to his throne. What, then, becomes the duty of the child of the Divine promises? Simply this—let him *do* the right, so far as he knows it, and in dependence on God's strength, day by day; and let him rest assured that the faithful Promise-keeper will find the fittings, and lead on to the final issues.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Joab, the military statesman.* Though this man, Joab, is introduced to us before (2 Sam. ii. 13, 26, etc.), yet, in order of time, this passage is his first appearance, and only here have we the account of his prowess in taking Jebus, and his part in the building of the city of David. He probably had been chief captain of David's band of outlaws, but on this occasion he gained the position of general of the national army, and he became subsequently the great military statesman of the kingdom, and the chief king's counsellor. Probably he may be regarded as the man who exercised most influence over the king, and the careful review of their relations produces a deep impression that the influence was seldom a good one. He became David's master, and under his bondage David vainly writhed and struggled in his later years.

I. JOAB HIMSELF. The incidents by which he is made known to us are mainly the following:—1. Abner's killing of Asahel, Joab's brother (2 Sam. ii. 12—32), filled Joab with purposes of revenge. 2. Joab treacherously slew Abner (2 Sam. iii. 6—39), and David felt himself too weak to do more than denounce the murder; he dare not punish the murderer. 3. Joab took a leading part in the wars of the reign, especially distinguishing himself against the Ammonites (2 Sam. x. 6—14). 4. Joab connived at David's sin in the matter of Bathsheba, and so gained the power over him which he so humiliatingly used afterwards. 5. Joab was faithful in the time of Absalom's rebellion. 6. He directly and insultingly disobeyed his king and lord in slaying Absalom. 7. He showed his mastery and his control of the army by killing Amasa, who had been appointed chief general in his stead. 8. He properly remonstrated with David against his self-willed scheme of taking a census. 9. But after David's death he took the part of Adonijah, and was condemned by Solomon. He was strictly a *man of the world*, brave, daring, manly, generous, and persevering, but masterful, impatient of what he thought David's hesitancy and weakness; a man who saw clearly an end to be aimed at, and was in no way particular about the choice of means by which to reach it. He was unscrupulous, having no quick sensitiveness of conscience to that which is wrong. He ordered his life by the rule of the *expedient*, not the rule of the *right*, and was heedless of the claims of others if they stood in his way. A man who was a type of a class still to be found in business and social spheres, who are all for self, and do not mind who they trample down as they go up. "His character was ambitious, daring, unscrupulous, yet with an occasional show of piety" (2 Sam. x. 12). Wordsworth says, "Joab is the personification of worldly policy and secular expediency, and temporal ambition eager for its own personal aggrandizement, and especially for the maintenance of its own political ascendancy, and practising on the weaknesses of princes for its own self-interests; but at last the victim of its own Machiavellian shrewdness."

II. JOAB'S INFLUENCE ON DAVID. Sometimes it was *good*. He skilfully aided in the restoration of the banished Absalom; and he properly roused the king from the excessive grief he felt at the death of his favourite son. Again and again, with statesman-like genius, he enabled David promptly to seize the occasions that promised success; and he had religion enough, or insight enough, to see where David was wrong in the matter of the census. But, as a whole, Joab's influence was *bad*. His unscrupulousness led David into crimes, and his masterfulness prevented David from properly

punishing crimes. When conflict came between state necessity and religious duty, Joab gained the victory for mere policy, and so made David act in ways that were unworthy of one who was only Jehovah's vicegerent. It is never good for us to come into the power of any fellow-man. We should be ever in *God's* lead, but refuse any fellow-man's bonds. And no undue influence exerted by a fellow-man can ever relieve our responsibility before God. Craft, guile, policy, are no forces of blessing in any human spheres.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*Success is guaranteed if God be with us.* It is stated that David “waxed greater and greater,” but we are not left in any uncertainty as to the real source of his prosperities. We are not permitted to limit our vision to merely favourable circumstances or unusual talents. The secret will go into a sentence: “The Lord of hosts was with him.” The introduction may be an account of the importance to David of securing the naturally impregnable city of Jebus for his capital; and of the energy with which both he and Joab set about fortifying and building and firmly consolidating the kingdom. There was an abundance of human energy.

I. THE OPEN AND APPARENT REASONS FOR HUMAN SUCCESS. We can so easily see—or fancy that we see—how they are due to human forces, such as exceptional *talents*; marvellous *energy*, such as that of the tradesman in Chicago, who raised a hut of the singed logs from his burnt warehouse, and put on it this sign, “All gone, save wife, children, and energy;” or a *perseverance* that will not yield to any hindrances or difficulties, that glories in triumphing over obstacles. Sometimes we say that success is due to a happy combination of circumstances, or good luck. And it does seem as if circumstances could favour individuals. Asaph, in the olden time, puzzled over the prosperity that seems to come so freely to bad men. And we may, with perfect propriety and full consistency with right religious feelings, recognize that human success is, as a rule, the appropriate reward of talent, and faculty, and perseverance, and good judgment. Success cannot be guaranteed as the response to these; but it is their ordinary and natural result, the proper issue toward which they tend. And even from our Christian standpoint, we properly urge a careful attention to all those ordinary conditions on which the prosperity of life depends. It is quite true that “the blessing of the Lord maketh rich;” but it is also true that the blessing comes as a gracious using and sanctifying of all right and worthy human endeavour. God will give his best to no man *unless the man will do his best.* God blesses no man's idleness and no man's thoughtlessness. We may lay on God's altar for acceptance only our *best possible*.

II. THE SECRET AND REAL REASONS FOR HUMAN SUCCESS. 1. *Divine permission.* God may withhold success. He may know that, in particular cases, it would not be the best thing; so “if the Lord will” must tone our very desire to win earthly prosperities. 2. *Divine presence and blessing.* “The Lord of hosts was with him,” not only in the sense of giving his presence and gracious help, but in the further sense of approving his schemes and aiding in their accomplishment. Of the first kind of Divine presence we may be always assured. Of the second kind we can be assured only when we so fully hold ourselves open to the Divine love and lead that what we plan and purpose is only and exactly *what the Lord would have us do.* Still, we must realize that, for us, our true life-success may not be that which we fashion for ourselves; it can only be that which God fashions for us. We may be a long time finding out what God's success for us is. And it is so often difficult for us to read it aright and understand it worthily, because it often has this subtlety in it—God holds within it a design of *personal culture*, and *that he counts to be the very highest form of life-success.* The great thing to win is the “*holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord.”—R. T.

Vers. 17—19.—*David's drink offering.* This incident is narrated also in 2 Sam. xxiii. 13—17. The “hold” that is mentioned is probably the frontier fortress of Adullam, on the Philistine border, “which, from its strength and position and the neighbourhood of the caverns, was judged by David to be the best place of defence against the invasions of the Philistines.” Robinson says, “There is no well of living water in or near the town of Bethlehem.” “There is, however, a cistern of ‘deep, clear, cool water,’ called by the monks David's well, about three-quarters of a mile to

the north of Bethlehem. Possibly the old well has been filled up since the town was supplied with water by the aqueduct." Josephus speaks of the well as being near the gate. David would not drink of the water when it was brought him, for this reason—he looked upon it, not as water, but as blood, seeing that it had been procured at the hazard of men's lives; and, knowing that it was forbidden by the Law to drink blood (Lev. xvii. 11, 12), he poured it out upon the ground as a solemn offering unto the Lord, and as a thanksgiving for the preservation of their lives.

I. DAVID'S HOME FEELINGS. In him there was strong family affection. This is seen in his relations with his grown-up sons. There was also strong attachment to his early home, the place of his youthful associations. Strong home feeling is usually found in the inhabitants of hilly and mountainous countries; as may be illustrated from the *mal-du-pays*, the characteristic sickness of the Swiss when away from their mountains. It does not appear that David did more than give utterance to a suddenly conceived wish. It was an impulsive utterance, which he did not mean should be taken as a command. Herein is given us a lesson on the importance of guarding carefully our speech, watching the door of our lips. He is not wise who utters all he feels. It is a great grace to be enabled to *keep silence*.

II. THE DEVOTION OF DAVID'S FOLLOWERS. This is one of the most interesting features of the incident. It brings to view the relations between David and his men, and helps us to realize the fascination which David exerted. Some men have this power over their fellows—a gracious power, if they use it to lead their fellow-men to higher and holier things; a fatal power, if they make it the means of dragging others down to their own doom. It may be pointed out that special gifts ensure this kind of leadership. Of these, *grace of body, generosity of disposition, a skill of getting on others' level, an absence of self-assertive pride, and a winning geniality of manner*, are important. If God gives grace of natural disposition, such as wins for us general favour, let us remember that this brings its holy burden of responsibility.

III. THE PROWESS IN WHICH DEVOTION FOUND EXPRESSION. Estimate it from a military point of view. It could but be regarded as a "foolhardy" enterprise; and yet the very suddenness and *dash* of it almost guaranteed its success. To gratify a wish these men would imperil their lives.

IV. THE PIous ESTIMATE OF THE VALUE OF LIFE. This tended to bind David's followers yet more closely to him. Such considerateness for them showed his loving and thoughtful and pious character. It was worth while serving one who cared for them so tenderly. Compare Wellington's personal interest in his soldiers, and the personal enthusiasm which he created. The sense of the value of human life is the very foundation of social morality, it stays man's hand from being lifted up against his fellow-man. And respect for man's best treasure—his life—finds varied expression in respect for all his other treasures and possessions. We will not injure him, in his life, nor in taking *anything that is his*. Lead on to show how the value of life is enhanced when we add to it two considerations—(1) *Man's immortality*; (2) *man's salvation*, through a sacrifice of infinite value.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XII.

This chapter is retrospective, and the contents of it are not found elsewhere. It is occupied, *first* (vers. 1—22), with the names and some accounts of those who had come to the help of David in three great crises in time past, to join themselves to him and his cause. And afterwards (vers. 23—40), with an enumeration of those representatives from the tribes who came (ch. xi. 1, 3) to support the proceedings of

the occasion when he was being made king of the whole people. Thus the chapter would divide really into four parts, to which the following sections will be found sufficiently to answer: *viz.* vers. 1—7; 8—18; 19—22; 23—40.

Ver. 1.—To Ziklag. The occasion referred to is evidently that recorded in 1 Sam. xxvii. 1, 2, 6, 7; xxx. 1, 26; and generally in those and the intermediate chapters. David stayed at Ziklag a year and four months, a period which closed for him with the death of Saul. Ziklag, in Joshua's original allot-

ment, was the possession of Simeon (Josh. xix. 5). It was situated south of Judah, and came into the hands of Judah when Achish made it a gift to David for a residence (1 Sam. xxvii. 5-7). The site of it has not been identified in later times. It witnessed one of the narrowest and most remarkable of the escapes of David, on an occasion which brought danger, not so much from acknowledged foes, as from the maddened grief and despair of his own friends and people (1 Sam. xxx. 3-6). The whole scene of the broken-hearted grief of David and his people, when, on discovering the successful raid of the Amalekites upon Ziklag, "they lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep," is one of the most dramatic on record. The rapid reverse to good fortune, when David turns away their heedless anger against himself and proposal to stone him, by pursuing and overcoming the enemy, and recovering their captives and their goods near the brook Besor, completes the effectiveness of the scene. The *middle voice* form of expression in this verse, kept himself close, means to say that David was, by fear of Saul and by force of his enemies, more or less hemmed up in Ziklag.

Ver. 2.—Of Saul's brethren of Benjamin. It would be better to read these words as the commencement of the next verse. Prominence is given to the fact that this set of helpers of David, counting in all twenty-three, comprised Benjamites—men of the same tribe with Saul (ver. 29). They had seen and been impressed by the wrongness and cruelty of Saul, and found themselves unable to keep in sympathy with him. Of such were Elazar, Ilai, and Ithai, mentioned in the preceding chapter (xi. 12, 29, 31, respectively). The Benjamites were noted both for their use of the bow, and of their own left hand (Judg. iii. 15, 21; xx. 15, 16; ch. viii. 39, 40; 2 Chron. xiv. 8).

Ver. 3.—The sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite. The Peshito-Syriac has בְּנֵי instead of בְּנֵי . This has the effect of making Joash the son of Ahiezer, and it makes Shemaah a third name in the list. This name has in the Hebrew the form for the article before it, and should appear in our version either as "Has-Shemaah," or "the Shemaah." The name, together with that of Azmaveth, is found in ch. viii. 13, 36, as belonging to the Benjamite tribe. The name Jezel is omitted in the Syriac Version, and the two names Pelet and Berachah appear as sons of Azmaveth (ch. xi. 33; 2 Sam. xxiii. 31, where the Baharmite means the Baharumite, i.e. the man of *Bahurim*, in Benjamin). The Antothite; that is, native of Anathoth. The place is not given in Josh. xviii.; but it was a "priests' city" with "suburbs" belonging

to Benjamin (ch. xi. 28; Josh. xxi. 18; 1 Kings ii. 26; Jer. i. 1; xxix. 27).

Ver. 4.—Among the thirty, and over the thirty. Yet the name of Ismaiah does not appear in the list of the preceding chapter, nor in its parallel; nor is it possible to identify it with any that does appear there. The suggested explanation is that he was in the *first edition* of that list, and died early. The expression, "among the thirty, and over the thirty," may possibly mean that, from distinction as one of them, he was promoted above them to be leader of them. Josabat the Gederathite. The name should be spelt Jozabat. The Gederah here suggested cannot to all appearance be that of Josh. xv. 36, in the Shephelah of Judah, as Jozabat was a Benjamite. If otherwise, it must be supposed to have come in some way into the possession of Benjamin.

Ver. 5.—Jerimoth. This name is found also among Benjamites (ch. vii. 8). Bealiah. This name comprises both the word *Baal*, and *Jah!* Hazuphite. The Masoretic word is הָזָעִפִּי (Neh. vii. 34). The sons of Hariph (Neh. vii. 24) may have belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.

Ver. 6.—Jashobeam. Possibly the same with him of ch. xi. 11; xxvii. 2. Korhites. Some authorities are as positive that this name designates Levitic *Korahites*, as others are sceptical about it. Bertheau explains the name as meaning descendants of Korah of Judah (ch. ii. 43). Others surmise that a Benjamite Korah, otherwise unknown to us, is pointed to. There does not seem any intrinsic difficulty in supposing that these were some of the Levite Korahites, whose proper and allotted abode was in Benjamin, or perhaps in Judah.

Ver. 7.—Of Gedor. The place apparently here spoken of (yet see ch. viii. 31; ix. 37) is unknown, and it is to be observed that in the Hebrew the article precedes the word (גֹּדוֹר). If it be the Gedor in Judah (ch. iv. 4), it is to be noted still that Jeroham is a name of a Benjamite (ch. viii. 27).

Ver. 8.—As ver. 1 is introduced by the description of those who came together "to David to Ziklag" at a certain time, so it seems evident that this verse introduces the mention of certain others who befriended David at another time, by coming to him into the hold to the wilderness. These others were Gadites in part, and the *hold* none more likely than that of Adullam (ver. 16 of last chapter), although the word here employed (לִבְנָה) for "hold" is a different form of the word (לִבְנָה) found both there and in the parallel (2 Sam. xxiii. 14). There is, however, nothing to negative the choice of other spots and occasions (1 Sam. xxii. 5; xxiii. 14, 19, 24, 29. Author-

rized Version; xxiv. 1, Authorized Version). This graphic description of the military and indeed native qualities of these Gadites, is in harmony with many other glimpses we get of them and their character (ch. v. 19—22; 2 Sam. i. 23; ii. 18).

Ver. 9—13.—The eleven names of these verses are all known elsewhere, but none of them as designating the same persons.

Ver. 14.—One of the least was over an hundred. This, evidently an incorrect translation, is easily superseded by the correct literal version, *One to a hundred the little one, and the great one one to a thousand.* The preposition *lamed* prefixed to the two numerals, “hundred” and “thousand,” will signify either that the “little one was *as good as* a hundred, and the great one *as good as* a thousand;” or that the “little one was *rare as* one of a hundred, and the great one *rare as* one of a thousand.”

Ver. 15.—In the first month. This corresponds with our end of March. The interesting incident of this verse is unrecorded in detail elsewhere (Josh. iii. 15; Jer. xii. 5; xlix. 19; 1. 44).

Ver. 16.—In addition to the Gadites, some others of Benjamin and Judah join David.

Ver. 17.—The solemn tone of David’s language recorded here, and the beautiful pathos and religious appeal of the last two sentences of the verse, bespeak sufferings and disappointments experienced by David heretofore through deception. It is, however, noticeable that there is no direct testimony of anything of this kind, least of all of any flagrant instance of it, on the part of such detachments of friends as had come to him; and *that*, though they had occasionally been contributed from sources not the most desirable (1 Sam. xxii. 2).

Ver. 18.—The response of the band, by the mouth of Amasai was worthy of the character of the appeal that David made, both in its heartiness and its high tone. *Amasai.* Possibly the same with Amasa (ch. ii. 17), the son of Abigail (David’s sister), wife of Jether (2 Sam. xvii. 25; xviii. 6; xix. 13; xx. 10). Ewald discusses this point (“Gen. Int.” ii. 544). He was made captain of the host by Absalom, afterwards by David, and Joab put an end to his life. The Spirit (see Numb. xi. 26; Neh. ix. 30). The more literal translation of the verb *came upon* is *clothed*. Most interesting and instructive is the subject of the gradually developing manifestation of the agency of the eternal Spirit from the beginning of the world. Through the ascending illustrations of his *natural* work in creation (Gen. i. 2), his relation to human *bodyly* life (Gen. ii. 7; Job xxvii. 3), his intellectual work of various kinds (Gen. xli. 38; Exod. xxviii. 3; Numb.

xxiv. 2; Judg. ix. 29), we are led on to his highest spiritual functions.

Ver. 19.—And there fell . . . of Manasseh to David. Of this use of *־־־־־* there are many other examples (2 Chron. xv. 9; Jer. xxxvii. 14; xxxix. 9). The phrase does not correspond with our own idiom of “falling to” one’s lot, but with that of “falling away” from the service or love of one to another, *i.e.* deserting. The occasion here spoken of is described in full in 1 Sam. xxix. 2—11.

Ver. 20.—Although those of Manasseh who wished to ally themselves with David did not—most providentially for David and his Ziklag people—have the opportunity of aiding him when, on the eve of Gilboa, he was about to aid Achish the prince of the Philistines against the Israelites and Saul, yet their help must have come in useful when, on his return “to Ziklag on the third day,” he found what the Amalekites had done, and pursued them (1 Sam. xxx. 1—6, 11—25). Seven is the number also of Eastern Manasseh mentioned in ch. v. 24. Nothing is now said of the men belonging to them joining with them. *Jozabad.* One manuscript quoted by Kennicott has for this name on its first occurrence *Jochabab*. It is scarcely likely that the same name should appear twice in this short list, without some qualifying mark being put to one of the two. Nothing else is known of these seven captains of the thousands of Manasseh.

Ver. 21.—The band. The band referred to is evidently that of Amalek in 1 Sam. xxx. 8, 9. *Were captains; better, became captains.*

Ver. 22.—The host of God. A forcible comment on the metaphorical use of this phrase is found in 1 Sam. xiv. 15; Authorized Version, “*a very great trembling*” is the translation of Hebrew “trembling of God.” The *for* with which this verse commences probably explains the call there was for many and able “captains” for a host becoming daily larger.

Ver. 23.—The bands; rather, the *chief men, or captains*, by one or the other of which words this same term has been several times hitherto rendered in the immediate context (yet see Judg. ix. 37, 44, and v. 30 for yet a third signification). There follow (vers. 24—37) the numbers of each tribe (the full *thirteen* being enumerated) who “came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel.” The large numbers of some of the joyful pilgrims to Hebron, as for instance of the trans-Jordanic tribes, the very small number that came of the tribe of Judah (in fact, lowest but one, *i.e.* Benjamin, and yet nearest home), and of some others, help to invest with doubt the numerals of this passage, although it is not

at all difficult to suggest some very passable explanations of these phenomena. This doubt is not lessened by the total, which, according to this list, must make a figure between three hundred and forty thousand and three hundred and fifty thousand men. To the host have to be added, as we are expressly told, the "asses, camels, mules, and oxen," which carried the "bread, meat, meal, cakes of fifts and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep in abundance," for the consumption of the host during their "three days" stay "with David," and their journeys to and fro. In the presence of such numbers, and the celebration of such an occasion, Hebron must indeed have beheld the reflection of its own probable meaning, of the "fellowship" or "community" of society. To turn the kingdom of Saul to him (so ch. x. 14). The phrase is not a common one. According to the word of the Lord (so ch. xi. 3; 1 Sam. xvi. 1, 12, 13).

Vers. 24, 25.—David had already found friends and adherents in these two southern tribes of Judah and Simeon.

Ver. 27.—Jehoiada. He was probably the father of Benaiah (see ch. xi. 22; xviii. 17; xxvii. 5; 2 Sam. viii. 18). The Aaronites. This is, of course, equivalent to saying "the priests," i.e. the priestly troops, of whom Jehoiada was leader.

Ver. 28.—Zadok. This is the first mention of Zadok. He was, no doubt, the chief priest, son of Abitub, of 2 Sam. viii. 17; 1 Kings i. 8; ch. xxiv. 3; xxix. 22. He is leader of the *Levites*.

Ver. 29.—Had kept the ward; rather, *had kept on the side of*; the Hebrew, *הָיָה בְּצָדְקָה*; Vulgate, *adhuc sequebatur*. The proposed translation of *רָתַרְתִּי* by "still" ('Speaker's Commentary,' *in loc.*) is very doubtful. The for hitherto of this verse explains the reason of the comparatively small number of the Benjamites.

Ver. 31.—*West Manasseh* is here treated of.

Ver. 32.—Had understanding of the times (2 Chron. ii. 12; Esth. i. 13; Job xxiv. 1). Compare Tacitus, "gnarus temporum" ("Agricola," § 6). This verse does not tell the number of the "children," but only of the "heads" of Issachar. It is possible that the number has slipped out. The description of the characteristics of Issachar here seems an advance upon that of Gen. xlix. 14, 15.

Ver. 33.—Not of double heart. This phrase should be connected closely with the preceding clause, of which it is the termination, the sense being that they were the men to face battle with no doubtful heart.

Vers. 34—36.—Naphtali, Dan, and Asher all show to advantage, in number at all events.

Ver. 37.—The east of Jordan group muster a high number, and of well-equipped men.

Ver. 39.—The supplies for eating and drinking were no doubt found chiefly in kind. To sum the number of the men here described, we should require to allow for those of Issachar and of the Aaronites and Zadokites added to the Levites (vers. 26—28). That grand total will not amount to the six hundred thousand of Exod. xii. 37.

Ver. 40.—Moreover, they that were nigh them. The meaning is that not only the "brethren" of Judah and of the nearer neighbourhood of Hebron joined to entertain and to show hospitality to the immense throngs of visitors, but that others did so in ever-widening circles, even as far as the remoter Issachar, Zebulun, and Naphtali. For there was joy in Israel. The joy must have been largely enhanced by the national consciousness of divided rule coming to an end, and of the cloud and frown of the Divine countenance having cleared mercifully away. All now could join to show loyalty and to feel it towards one king, of whom they had reason to believe that he was the chosen of God as of themselves.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 17.—*The suspicion that has power to propitiate favour.* There is very great distinction to be drawn between suspicion and suspiciousness. The latter describes the character, expresses a characteristic, and reveals a tendency or bias that can find no admirer, unless it be a man of taste the most vitiated and unlovely. The former may be easily enough the necessity of accident or circumstance. It may possibly mark out the person who on occasion manifests it as deserving and plaintively claiming sympathy and help. The fact of its being betrayed rather than stifled, and the *manner* in which it expresses itself when it does so, may set up additional pleas for kindly interpretation, and go some way further than merely to extenuate it. Habitual suspiciousness, then, must be either the result of the badness of inborn quality—into the mysteries of which suggestion this is not the place to enter—or the outgrowth of a life and of circumstance in nothing more unhappily placed than in producing this as their natural fruit. While of the suspicion that may avail even to ingratiate a man with the best of his

fellows, silently beseech kindness and fidelity and propitiate favour, we have a touching example in the history of the text. Notice the explaining, justifying, and redeeming features of this suspicion.

I. THE SUSPICION TO WHICH DAVID GIVES EXPRESSION AROSE IN THE MIDST OF CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH INVOLVED THE QUESTION OF LIFE OR DEATH. This question of life or death was that which actually caused the suspicion. He who felt it and spoke it was in supreme danger. The disposition of frankness, generosity, forgivingness, must be brought to think, calculate, be cautious under certain circumstances. If otherwise, that disposition is no longer entitled to its old honourable titles, but to titles of far less repute, *not* lovely, *not* of good report—such as recklessness, or at least heedlessness. The very perfection of the former will be tarnished if they are not answerable to certain kinds of consideration. Forgivingness in itself is ever one of the noblest dispositions, but it is not under all conceivable circumstances to be exercised and to become *forgiveness*. The highest teaching, that of the New Testament and of Jesus, runs counter to this, and the sternest and deepest facts of human condition in the presence of God, and placed under the light of Christ's atonement, disown it. For then forgiveness would both come of indifferent and insufficient estimate of the just and the right, and would be adapted to give fearful encouragement and incentive to the same. So in the same way, confidence is not to be reposed with an equal unhesitatingness in all cases, just because confidence is an engaging quality and graces the character, while suspicion does the reverse. In the higher moral aspects and relations of our merely human life we constantly recognize this as a principle. And in the highest spiritual aspects and relations of our life its illustrations are inevitable and are arresting even to the point of admiration. There is a sense in which the supreme issues of life or death have been felt by the holiest men who have lived to warrant the expression, for the moment, of some doubt, until the tremblingness of the human heart and the feebleness of the human hand have really felt the force of the Divine presence and the comfort of the Shepherd's "crook and staff." Many of the supreme facts of our present life, if not all of them, bring us very near indeed to those of our spiritual "unseen" life. But even far within these limits human hearts ask large things of one another, and invoke an immensity of trust and repose an immensity of trust not unfrequently where it is little recognized, little honoured. One walks out with his life in his hand and a weight on his heart almost intolerable, to meet another whose mirth it may be to make mischief, and to hear his sentence and receive his destiny to all human intents from light lip and unthinking heart. This sobers human trust and checks the luxuriant growth of mutual confidence, and justifies David when he prefers to express, rather than seem to disdain, his already hard-bought experience of human compassions and "tender mercies," and finally, *sometimes* turns the action of suspicion toward men into the virtue of deeper trust toward God.

II. THE SUSPICION TO WHICH DAVID GIVES EXPRESSION WAS NOT ONE THAT GREW OUT OF A HEART THAT KNEW IT BECAUSE ITSELF DID THE DEEDS OF IT AND SCENTED ITS OWN REWARD, BUT FROM ONE CONSCIOUS OF INTEGRITY. David directly appeals to Heaven in attestation of his not having earned any faithless treatment at the hands of Saul, and of any such as might possibly be emissaries of Saul. It is a great thing to be able to make such an appeal honestly and with the firmness that comes of the inner answer of a good conscience. It would have been very different, it was very different, with Jacob. When, after an absence of twenty-one years from his father's house, he must now return and meet Esau, he met him with ill-suppressed suspicion and very natural distrust, and the worst misery of which was that they were self-inflicted and richly merited. A similar proneness to suspicion, a similar distrust of every unwonted whisper of the winds of providence, or unwonted sign of a fellow-creature's countenance or tone of his voice, evidently dogged the steps and days and very hours of those of Joseph's brethren who had been "verily guilty concerning" him. For all such suspicion there is no redeeming word to be spoken, except that it is of that retribution which, partial though its manifestations be at present, helps to establish thoughtful men's faith in the great throne of righteousness, justice, and judgment. But far otherwise is it now with David's suspicion. "If," says he, "ye be come to betray me to mine enemies"—there was the fear and the mistrust and the suspicion—"seeing there is no wrong in mine hands"—there is the *fearless assertion of innocence*—"the God of our

fathers look thereon, and rebuke it." So does *this* sort of suspicion issue, in appealing to the omniscience of God, in leaving the matter of avenging and rebuking to God, and in committing his own cause and himself to the care and love of him that judgeth righteously.

III. THE SUSPICION TO WHICH DAVID GIVES EXPRESSION WAS ONE BORN OF A HEART THAT NEVERTHELESS YEARNED TO TRUST, TO REPOSE CONFIDENCE, TO LOVE WITH THOROUGH UNION. David any way incurs the risk of going forth to meet these volunteers. It would have been madness to do so had Saul himself been in the company. When Saul was most in David's hand and within his power, it is noticeable that, with all his generous and God-taught sparing of him, David does not neglect the manifestly necessary precaution as to himself and his own safety. The oft-aimed javelin, though it had missed its literal aim, had not missed mark altogether. It had fixed what might sometimes, what under other circumstances often has been worse than any javelin in the breast or heart, viz. a lifelong cause for caution and distrust. But let there be any justifiable doubt, any reasonable ground for hope in fair play and sincerity, and it is not David's heart that will be slow to respond to it, hazard its genuineness, and welcome its approach. What an honest speech his is! Nothing disguised, he acknowledges he needed "help." "To help me" is his humble confession, untinged by haughtiness. And nothing affected, warrior though he was, good with every weapon, the sling and stone upward, yet his heart's deepest desire is peace: "If ye be come peaceably." And nothing ungenerous; his own individuality is not sheltered under the cloak or behind the bulk of a big-sounding "cause" or "principle," or other professed issue at stake. No; he says, "If ye be come *unto me*." But what then? what of all this? Why, "Mine heart shall be knit unto you," my heart shall be *one* with you. There is no offer to make any other bargain. There is no condition of any sufficient credentials, and such as will bear searching and microscopic examination. He takes an honest face, an honest tone, an open offer, a loving heart, one that is prepared to trust and longs to trust—suspicion its strange and unwelcome work. And this constitutes for him the inner gift and discernment, to recognize their counterparts in others. And his gladdened ear hears the cheers of his own catchword, "peace," twice re-echoed for himself, and again "one cheer" for his "helpers." While God's Name and praise and faithful promise close the matter of the dialogue: "Thy God helpeth thee." Happy if every beginning of suspicion ended with such confidence!

Ver. 18.—*The Spirit that taught to speak and taught to hear aright.* The words of Amasai, the uttering of which is especially ascribed to the impulse of the Spirit, must be worthy of some particular notice. They may be depended upon for containing and being ready to convey some instructive lessons or illustrations of important principle. The caution or suspicion of David at a moment of such uncertainty for him has been accounted for and justified. Amasai's answer that moment to the doubting language and bearing of David should properly decide all either one way or the other, if he is to be depended on to speak truth and without dissembling. But how did David know this? Could he unerringly read the signs and trust his own power to discern? There are moments when honesty and truth may be said to be unable to do anything else than recognize honesty and truth; they know their own face as a man knows his own face in a mirror. Tone also tells the truth, that mere words may not be depended upon to tell, and certainly tone and look and manner all added are very reliable witnesses one way or the other, witnesses of sincerity or insincerity. Any way, it is scarcely open to us in any fairness to suppose that David would, by carelessness or by self-confidence, lose the second moment the very advantages which his caution and venial suspicion show that he was in quest of the former moment. So we may suppose at all events that the same Spirit who taught Amasai to speak aright taught David to hear aright. At the same time, that Spirit himself seldom moves without signs accompanying and following. Some evidences of this may be observable as we proceed. Notice—

I. SOME EVIDENCES OF SINCERITY STAMPED ON THE ANSWER OF AMASAI. 1. *Its promptness.* There was no hesitation, no casting about for words, no lingering to contrive safe words. A falsehood is often boldly spoken, and the tongue of insincerity is practised in glibness and smoothness. But this will generally be in paths already well known, and not as now, when perhaps the last thing to have been expected from the

lip of David was the boldness that was required for the outspeaking of suspicion. 2. *Its unqualified frankness.* No limping sentence, no lame engagement, no offer nor attempt at contract or bargain, but uncompromising self-surrender: "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse." Such is the style of these men and of zealous fidelity of service. 3. *The absence of the slightest appearance of feeling offended.* There might have seemed room in such a case, some plausible room, for betraying a sense of affrontedness. Honest men come up to offer their allegiance, love, and very life, and they are met with question sceptical of their honesty. This was a growingly good sign of their sincerity, for the affronted man often enough knows, as often as any bystander, that there is no affront; that that which may sound like affront or look like it is the necessity of wisdom and of the position, and he betrays himself in seeing the affront—betrays that he wishes to take it. 4. *The discrimination shown in the selection of one word used in this reply.* "Peace" is the key-word of their reply. David had said—had happened to say—no, had designed to say, "If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me." Everything lay really in that word "peaceably." And the men questioned, perceived, and felt it, and Amasai, led by the Spirit, answers both to the spirit and to the letter of the somewhat plaintive melancholy "if" of David. "Peace" is the burden of his response. 5. *The heart and earnestness thrown into the reply,* "Peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers." David's was a question of peace for himself, and of help for himself. But such is the confidence in their cause and in themselves as honest men, that those who come to him engage and assure "Peace, peace" for him and for those who should help him. This looks like men thoroughly conversant with their subject and thoroughly confident in it. They seem to want to say that there is no stint of peace; their persuasion of it is such that they are sure it is "enough" for him and "enough for all." 6. *The piety and right sound practical theology thrown into it.* The answer does not "heal slightly." It does not promise "peace" from a barren source. It does not rest its own confidence on man. "For thy God helpeth thee" is the assigned ground of Amasai's confidence, that peace dawning splendidly and surely now for David and for his cause. These men themselves had done right to wait till they were sure that the call was of God, and that God was with David, and that the cause of David was the cause of God. And as soon as they were convinced of this they came to David. And they came to help, nerve, and brace up his own faith, while they would say to him, "If God be with thee, who can be against thee?" "If God be with thee, what but peace can attend thy steps and those of all thy helpers?"

II. SOME EVIDENCE OF A GOOD TRUSTFUL HEART IN DAVID. 1. *He also makes no delay.* He receives them who had answered so well and so much to the point. He receives them "graciously." And became then and there a feeble, humble, but real type of him who "receives graciously" all who humbly and with the spirit of self-surrender and faithful service come to him. 2. *He heartily trusts.* As they had with heart replied to him, and with enthusiasm proffered to join him and his cause, he throws at once to the winds the last symptom of a suspicion, and reposes a hearty trust in the new-comers. "He made them captains of the band." There were trust and promotion at the same time. It is not one of the least interesting parts of the study of the manner of Jesus' miracles to observe how against those occasions on which for some good reason he saw fit to keep even an earnest suppliant waiting, there were others in which alike with signal promptness he blessed them, and with signal trust and condescension called them to his service. It now needed no condescension on the part of David, but it did need trust, and he finally acquits himself herein of any suspicion of possessing a heart that loves suspicion.

Ver. 40.—*The earnest of human joy.* When the joy of a vast number of people finds expression in unison it must needs be exceedingly impressive. Were it possible to hear at once that spontaneous volume of sound of gladness, it would be nothing less than overpowering in its effect. Or, if it were possible to see at a glance all the signs and all the manifestations of the sparkling gladness, no scene of outer nature could be supposed so dazzling, so bewildering. But in the known harmonious joy of a vast multitude of people, it is not the mere effect upon our sense of the expression of it or the manifestation of it that would invest it with its most real and in fact most solemn

force. This would rather be due to the suggestions thickly, richly clustering round about it. Whence it grew, what it had intrinsically in it, and to what it was promising to grow, would assuredly be some of the first of the thought which we should thereupon think. And these deeper, less visible feeders of our own joy would prove the more lasting and the more significant account of the deep feeling wrought within us. The point of Scripture narrative at which we are now arrived reveals to us a whole nation in the crisis of its joy. There are peculiarities about that joy very possibly of a merely temporary character, but there are others that are good for study, as permanent in their nature and as having the efficacy of principles. Let us take note—

I. **OF SOME OF THE CAUSES OF THIS "JOY IN ISRAEL."** The nearer causes are not doubtful. For: 1. The people were glad to have reached the termination of a period harassed by suspense. For some years now they had not lived under any certain satisfactory rule. If their armies had gone out best equipped and full of courage in their cause, they were still not confident that the cause was a safe one, a right one, one that would command the presence among them of the supreme Leader of their hosts, who taught their hands to war and their fingers to fight. And if they were awhile at peace at home, they had no guarantee that the time of peace was one of growth and sound healthy prosperity. The family, the business establishment, is ever in uncertainty, and there is an absence of satisfaction if the parent or the master is all uncertain in habit, in character, in principle. 2. They were glad to have a king who was introduced to them under far different and far better auspices than ever their former king had been. Some years had now elapsed since Saul took office, and though he was anointed by Divine command, yet the distinct announcement was made of a deep disapproval in one sense on the part of the only real King. Under dark omens their visible monarchy opened upon Israel. And the thoughtful and deeper-seeing of the wise and good, the "Israelites indeed" among them, will have early wakened to the process that was going on, and to that fulfilment of Divine forebodings that was transpiring in the overcast periods of Saul's defection. But now part of their punishment had already fallen, and for a time they had reason to think that fairer things were before them. They with reason thought that the king of their own enthusiastic choice this day was also "the man after God's own heart." They knew he was not an untried man. They knew rather *how tried* he had been and also *how he had been* tried, and how he had borne and acquitted himself in the trial, so as to command the growing honour, esteem, and love of all the people. How tremendous the difference and the consequences of the difference between a good leader, parent, teacher, master, ruler, and a bad or indifferent one! No man is so obscure, so stripped of all surroundings, as to be absolutely bereft of influence and "to live to himself" alone, but they whose very life-place and life-business are to "lead" or "shepherd" in any way are in the very opposite extreme of such a *supposition*, and the consequences of just what they are, what they say, what they do, are incalculable in momentousness and in responsibility. And an unwilling people show now that they had become very fully alive to this fact. 3. All Israel were glad because all Israel were now again one and at one in the matter of their king and leader. One tabernacle and one court, one palace, one king, one administration of justice, now again they can call theirs. They do not feel the humiliation, the disgrace, the practical disadvantage of the contrary of these. One of the keenest reproaches which the enemies of Israel must have often flung in their face was their divided state under so much of Saul's nominal kingship and for a few years subsequently.

II. **OF SOME OF THE DEEPER ELEMENTS FIXING THE CHARACTER OF THIS JOY.** One of these did no doubt at this time play a considerable part, though the people were largely unconscious of it. For: 1. Even the mistaken aspiration and that which was counted to them as a sin, to have a visible king, did for all that *mark* an aspiration, and *this* also was counted to them and counted for good so far as ever they permitted it. The very language in which they originally worded their desire was remarkable, in this respect, though somewhat less so in that they quoted as some precedent the fashion of surrounding nations—no models for *them*. "Make us a king to judge us, . . . that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles" (1 Sam. viii. 5-20). The large multitude of people in different tribes sharply outlined, and in families surprisingly registered, were

feeling for something the reverse of classification—the oneness of national life. And at present they found the spiritual effort by itself severe. They craved some embodiment of the ideas and feelings which were now strongly working within them. And their sin in desiring in aid hereof a visible judge, warrior, king, was in kind but like the sin of all those who do not rise to their opportunity and who do live below their time of day, their light, their *revelation*. God is ever, by providence and by word, pronouncing our human nature to be capable of doing better things than it does, and of rising to higher things than it consents to acknowledge by corresponding effort. However on the lower level this people may be beheld, and beheld with some sympathy, as they now yearned for a closer brotherhood, a more homogeneous development of national life, a semblance still of the perfect model, of which, however strangely, they “judged themselves unworthy.” They took, or certainly seemed to themselves to take, a great step in advance in this respect when to-day they not only rejoiced around a king, one of their own choice and of God’s distinctest choice as well, but when *all* of them were united thus to rejoice. There were no longer two kings, one nominal, the other real, nor a people divided into two at least, and an army in two camps, but when “*all Israel*” felt and showed and spoke the great joy with heartfelt, spontaneous unanimity. 2. Akin to this, less acknowledged but not less potent stimulus of a united nation’s joy, may be ranged the various life, and character, and age, and condition, all fairly represented, which swelled the bulk of it. All classes of citizen life, and the priest and the warrior; all *conditions* of the life of that time, and the rich and the poor; all ages of lifetime, the man laden with memories and the young man, the strong and the weak;—none were shut out from this joy. And thus this multifarious composition of it helped to fix the joy.

III. OF SOME OF THE LASTING SUGGESTIONS OF IT. 1. May it not justly suggest the thought of the fulness and special bliss there is about unselfish joy. Our individual joy is often tainted with selfishness, or self-regard only. Our domestic joy is not unfrequently tarnished by it. Most of the organizations of which we form parts are open to fostering in some degree the same *partial* fellowship of joy. But a general national joy largely escapes this snare of partial measure. 2. Does it not opportunely suggest the large reserve of capacity of joy there must be at present in human nature? We have just enough, we may be thankful to believe, to supply to us the requisite light and heat in the history of most men, but there is more cloud and darkness, more rain and cold, than there is of the real experience and outburst of joy. We have no right to be unthankful for what our inner sky is, and for the amount of peace and serenity, warming betimes into cheerfulness and into genialness, granted to us. But where the most and the best of these are true, we can never mistake them for the surrender of our powers, susceptibility, and very self to the amplitude of joy, of which they are capable even here. But least of all is it common to find the maximum of joy spread at the same time over the maximum of people. 3. And does it not betoken something of the rapture of *expectant* humanity—humanity perfected, redeemed, sanctified? God is full of joy. We cannot dare to form an idea of him antagonistic to such a principle. “Fallen short of his glory,” as we now are, we have become almost too complacently reconciled to the forfeit paid, to the present toned-down temper of life, to its present strong admixture of sorrow, woe, darkness, and we may detect ourselves sometimes thinking this to be the essential condition instead of the severe rebuke rising gradually into the beneficial discipline of life. But no; “we look for new heavens and a new earth,” in which, as surely as “righteousness shall dwell,” so surely shall joy reign for ever and ever. How universal, how impartial, how perfect in all highest elements of it, will be that harmony of human joy, when the kingdoms of this world shall have all merged in the kingdom of the one great King, eternal, immortal, invisible, and he shall have become the Chosen of all nations, of every tribe and family—“great David’s greater Son”!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 8—15.—*The Gadites*. Like gathers to like—the brave to the brave, the good to the good. It is human nature at its best which recognizes and rejoices in superiority.

Homage and obedience should be freely rendered where they are justly claimed and truly deserved. Observe the qualities and exploits of these sons of Gad who gathered to David and offered him their swords. They were men of might, bold as lions, swift as eagles; men skilful in the use of their weapons, apt for war, brave in danger, "good at need;" men whose deeds were in the lips of a nation, memorable and unforget-*ten*. We may discern in the qualities of these valiant Gadites the qualities which (*mutatis mutandis*) should characterize Christians as the soldiers of Christ and combatants in the "holy war."

I. THE SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS ARE DEVOTEDLY ATTACHED TO THEIR COMMANDER. As the Gadites "separated themselves unto David," so Christians are drawn by the living Spirit to the standard of Immanuel. It is distinctive of Christianity that it involves personal attachment and allegiance to the Redeemer. Christ is "the Captain of our salvation." To him we owe our loyalty; at his summons we draw the spiritual sword; in his cause we fight.

II. THE SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS ARE DIVINELY QUALIFIED FOR THE CONFLICT. Their heavenly Leader alike provides them with weapons and breathes courage into their souls. When he enlists them in his spiritual host, he disciplines and trains them for the warfare. He imparts those moral qualities of endurance and boldness, promptness and devotion, by which alone they can be qualified to "fight the good fight of faith."

III. THE SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS ARE EXPECTED, BY DIVINE AID, TO ACHIEVE GREAT EXPLOITS. The enemy is indeed formidable, his opposition is fierce. "We wrestle with principalities and powers." Within and without we encounter a foe whose craft and power we must not under-estimate. Yet have the soldiers of Christ no reason for discouragement. The weapons of their warfare, though not carnal, are mighty. Their Leader has conquered, and has taken his seat upon his victorious throne; and thence he inspits, directs, and helps them. The giant forms and mighty forces of error and ignorance, of superstition and infidelity, of vice, crime, and sin, are all destined to give way before the onset of the spiritual forces of Immanuel. It is a "holy war" to which Christians are summoned. Certain victory awaits the faithful combatant.

CONCLUDING APPEAL. Christ calls upon every hearer of the gospel to enlist under his banner.

"The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar;
Who follows in his train?"

T.

Ver. 18.—*Loyalty.* It was the suspicion and the adjuration of David that called forth this passionate language of devotion and loyalty on the part of Amasai, the spokesman of the men of Benjamin and Judah. When these men came forward, offering their swords to the valiant son of Jesse, he appears to have suspected them of treacherous designs. If language could prove their sincerity, the language recorded in the text must have had this effect: "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, . . . peace be unto thee, and . . . to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee." It is remarkable that this utterance is declared to have been prompted by "the Spirit," i.e. of God himself, who is the Author of truth, sincerity, and fidelity. If we take this language as appropriate, when addressed by Christians to their Divine Lord, it brings before our minds the nature and obligation of *Christian loyalty*.

I. CHRISTIANS RECOGNIZE IN THEIR SAVIOUR THE "HELP OF THE LORD." This is the literal meaning of the name "Jesus," i.e. "the Help or Salvation of Jehovah." David's Son and David's Lord is "mighty to save;" in him the Lord has indeed "laid help upon One who is mighty."

II. CHRISTIANS ACKNOWLEDGE THE ROYAL AUTHORITY OF CHRIST. He was King, even when here upon earth in his humiliation, even when crowned with thorns, when his sceptre was a reed, when he wore the purple robe laid over his shoulders in mockery. How much more manifestly is he King, now that he is in glory! Every loyal subject of the Lord Christ delights to acknowledge his sovereignty, to do him homage, to offer him tribute, to obey his will.

III. CHRISTIANS OFFER TO CHRIST THEIR HEARTS AND THEIR SERVICE. “*Thine are we.*” Such is the exclamation of the true soldiers of the cross. We are his by every bond. He has a right to our love, our life, our all. Let him be enthroned in our spirits; let him rule in our life; let his love inspire our devotion; let his law direct our active service.

IV. CHRISTIANS DESIRE AND PRAY FOR THE PROSPERITY OF CHRIST’S CAUSE. “*Peace,*” said the Benjamite to David, “*Peace be unto thee, and . . . to thine helpers!*” If our hearts are given to Christ, nothing will be so dear to us as the progress of his kingdom, the prosperity of his cause, the honour of his gracious Name. “*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*” “*Prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised.*”—T.

Ver. 22.—*A great work needs great help.* The way in which David was prepared for the sovereignty over Israel is very remarkable. He himself was disciplined by adversity for days of power and prosperity. And the people were gradually, during the later years of Saul’s life and reign, made ready for the transfer of their allegiance to his nobler successor. His life as an outlaw was one of many dangers and perplexities and straits. But during this period many able and valiant men became acquainted with the daring and sagacious chief, learned to trust in him, attached themselves to his camp, and qualified themselves for posts of honour and authority in the kingdom that was to be founded by the son of Jesse. It was “at that time,” that, “day by day, there came to David to help him, until it was a great host [or, ‘camp’], like the camp of God.”

I. IN ACCOMPLISHING A GREAT WORK, PROVIDENCE MAKES USE OF AN INDIVIDUAL AS THE CENTRE OF INFLUENCE AND AS THE LEADER OF OTHERS. Israel was to be consolidated into a mighty nation, and God chose David to do the work. He qualified him by his Spirit; gave him valour and prudence and the power of attracting others and attaching them to himself. And when God would restore humanity to its intended purpose, and establish his kingdom upon earth, he “set his King upon his holy hill of Zion.” He chose to accomplish the great end by means of the Son of man, David’s Son and David’s Lord.

II. GOD GATHERS MEN AROUND THIS INDIVIDUAL BY THE ATTRACTION OF SYMPATHY AND FELLOWSHIP. David’s fellow-countrymen recognized in him the qualifications necessary for a leader, a commander, a king. The valiant and capable, the flower of the youth, were drawn to him by the bonds of a mighty attraction. He could never have done the work entrusted to him if he had been left alone. But he found lieutenants, counsellors, friends, with whose help everything became possible which was possible to man. This was an emblem of the power which Christ possesses to attach men’s souls to himself. “*I,*” said he, “*if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself.*” It was so at the beginning. The apostles were Christ’s lieutenants and captains in his holy war. The early history of the Church tells how capable and devoted men were raised up, to teach and preach, to organize and administer, to write and expound, to suffer, to witness, and to die. And from that time there has never been an era in which noble, brave, self-denying men have not been drawn to the Saviour by the magnetism of the Spirit’s influence, and qualified to render service to the Church and to its Lord.

III. THESE HELPERS COME SUCCESSIVELY AND CONSTANTLY, AS NEED REQUIRES. David’s confederates came in successive bands, as emergencies arose in which they were needed. His heart must have been cheered as they came, unexpectedly and yet most welcome, “*day by day.*” A gradual and constant accession was thus made to his following, and to his power to rule when the right time came. It is the same in the kingdom of Christ, which “cometh not with observation,” but the history of which is, nevertheless, one of incessant progress. In many ways God is bringing souls to the camp of his Son. And his warriors shall be numerous as the dewdrops of the morning, as the stars in the heavenly host of God.

IV. BY THE AGENCY OF NUMEROUS AND MIGHTY HELPERS THE GREAT WORK IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. The preparations made, according to the text, issued in the establishment of a throne and dominion. And Christ’s kingdom is to come on earth, not by the agency of angels or by the instrumentality of miracles, but by the consecrated

adhesion of devoted, fearless, and self-denying spirits. In every congregation may many come, day by day, to Christ, to help him in his kingdom and his warfare!—T.

Ver. 32.—Men of understanding. The position of Issachar among the tribes was one central and desirable. Some of the richest land in Palestine fell to their lot, and they seem to have enjoyed material prosperity. The strong ass crouched between burdens is emblematical alike of plenty and of toil. How to connect Issachar's prosperity in husbandry with the characteristics of the text is by no means easy, perhaps not possible. But it is high praise which the chronicler accords to this tribe, or to "the heads" or leaders among them—they were "men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."

I. THE GIVER OF WISDOM IS GOD. He is "the Father of lights." "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." From him alone counsel and guidance proceed. By his Spirit he enlightens men. Hence the reasonableness and the importance of prayer.

II. THE MEANS OF GAINING WISDOM ARE WITHIN MEN'S REACH. No doubt there are certain natural qualifications; yet these may either be left undeveloped, or may be cultivated. Observation, conversation with the learned, the wise, and the experienced, reading, practical conduct of affairs—all these are means of acquiring wisdom. Nor must we overlook one potent agency—"Years, that bring the philosophic mind."

III. PRACTICAL LIFE IS THE GREAT SPHERE OF WISDOM. The text alludes to present necessities. Issachar had "understanding of the times." True wisdom does not lie in comprehending past states of society, so much as in realizing the characteristics and needs of our own days. The text alludes also to action. Historical and scientific and speculative knowledge are all good. But knowledge reduced to practice is wisdom. What Israel ought to do; this was what the wise men of this tribe were competent to decide. We may set aside all the explanations of this passage which represent the men of Issachar as versed in astronomy, chronology, or other studies. There can be no doubt the reference is to political sagacity, military promptness, and practical habits. These men recognized in David a faculty for ruling, strongly, justly, and religiously; and accordingly they were forward to give in their adhesion to the son of Jesse, to repair to Hebron, and take part in the election and installation of the new king.

LESSONS. 1. Remember that we are made for action; knowledge is valuable as qualifying for practical life. 2. Wisdom, qualifying for the duties of our several stations, is within all men's reach. 3. Statesmen especially should make it their study to know what the nation ought to do.—T.

Ver. 33.—"Singleness of heart." Several of the tribes who joined in electing David king are characterized by the chronicler in a few graphic words. It was good testimony which was borne to the warriors of Zebulun, that "they were not of double heart." Not in war only, but in all the affairs of life, and especially in religion, it is a weakness to be double-hearted; it is strength to have a single heart—to be, as in the Hebrew, "without a heart and heart."

I. DESCRIBE THE CHARACTER AND POSITION OF THE DOUBLE-HEARTED. 1. Those may be assigned to this class who are *undecided whether to serve God or the world*. As a matter of fact, those who are in such a state of mind are decided, for the present, against God. "He that is not with me is against me." It is a pitiable, weak, unhappy condition, and none should remain in it for a single day. "If the Lord be God, serve him; but if Baal, then serve him." 2. Those also may be termed double-hearted who are *attempting to serve both God and the world*. There are misguided persons who flatter themselves that they can rank with both the opposing forces. Christ has spoken very plainly upon this matter, saying, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon;" "No man can serve two masters, for . . . he will love the one and hate the other." 3. There are those who *profess to serve God, but, in reality and in their heart of hearts, are serving the world*. These profess a single eye to God's glory; but in truth they are ever seeking, as the great aim of their life, their own glory, or wealth, or pleasure, or ease. These are hypocrites; against such the censure and condemnation of Christ are stern and unmistakable.

II. DESCRIBE THE GUILT AND MISCHIEF OF DOUBLE-HEARTEDNESS. 1. It is *dishonouring to God, who has a just claim upon a perfect allegiance and service*. By

every claim we are his, and his only, and to withhold from him aught that is ours is an infringement upon his rights. His demand is a just and unvarying one: "My son, give me thine heart." 2. It is *evidence of ingratitude towards Christ*. When the Lord Jesus undertook our redemption, he did not leave his work half finished, for he did not undertake it with half a heart, with a divided purpose, a distracted love. Shall we give a divided heart to him who gave *himself* for us? 3. It is *disastrous in its effect* upon those who witness its exhibition. How many young minds have been prejudiced against religion by the double-heartedness of its professors! And what mischief has been wrought in society by such a spectacle! How often has it shaken the confidence and deterred the progress of inquirers into Christianity! 4. It is *deteriorating to the character* of those who are tempted into it. What more contemptible than vacillation? "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." The longer the habit is persevered in, the more mischievous are its consequences to its victim. He cannot but sink in his own esteem and lose the strength which is imparted by self-respect.

LESSONS. 1. Remind those of double heart of the fearful danger to which this sin exposes them. 2. Warn Christians against the temptations of sin and the world. 3. Encourage the young to give their whole heart to their God and Saviour.—T.

Ver. 38.—Union. Too often the counsels of Israel were divided, and their true interest frustrated by party spirit, by envy, by faction. The occasion before us was one of national harmony and co-operation. To make David king the people were of one heart. A lesson this as to the spirit and the attitude becoming in the Church of Christ.

I. **THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.** The unity to be desired is not nominal or formal, but real. This unity consists of: 1. *Submission to one Lord*. As Israel did homage and rendered obedience to one king, David, so we, as Christians, are bound to be subject to the authority of our righteous Prince, even Christ, David's Son and David's Lord. 2. *Acknowledgment of one faith*. The unity of the faith is real. All who are Christ's receive the truth of Christ, and hold it fast for his sake. A common principle, a common sympathy, a common aim, impart unity to those who cherish them. 3. *Reception of one baptism*. The same Spirit descends, in copious showers, upon all the followers of Jesus Christ, making them partakers of the same purity and the same spiritual life.

II. **THE PROOFS AND SIGNS OF UNITY.** Unity consists in one attitude towards Heaven, but it declares itself by certain palpable manifestations amongst Christians. Especially mutual love, confidence, and helpfulness, and common sacrifices of prayer and praise, and common labours for the world's enlightenment and salvation.

III. **THE BLESSED RESULTS OF UNITY.** These are: 1. *Happiness*. Discord is fruitful of misery; harmony of felicity and joy. A united Church is a happy Church. 2. *Strength*. *L'union fait la force*. Israel under David was powerful, because all were of one mind and heart. So in the Church of the living God. A united Church is a strong Church. Its enemies cannot reproach or despise it. 3. *Efficiency*. Christ, the great Head and High Priest of the Church, saw this. Hence the language of his prayer: "That they all may be one . . . that the world may know that thou hast sent me." Oh that the whole world were "of one heart" in acknowledging Jesus as King of kings, in crowning him Lord of all!—T.

Ver. 40.—"Joy in Israel." After the reign of Saul, with all its caprice, violence, and irreligiousness, it was with something more than a feeling of relief that Israel welcomed the accession of his successor. The unity of the people was manifested in the large and representative assembly that gathered together at Hebron, and the cordial sympathy of the absent in the presents and tribute forwarded from all parts of the land. The feasting was prolonged for three days; for the tables were abundantly furnished by the contributions of the several tribes, even from those in the northern districts of Palestine. Let us regard the "joy in Israel" as emblematic of that which pervades Christendom in the acknowledgment of Christ's Divine and regal authority.

I. **THE OCCASION of this joy.** It is the sovereignty of the Messiah. "I have set my

King upon my holy hill of Zion." Christ is the rightful King of humanity. He is the acknowledged and actual King of his ransomed Church. "He shall reign until he hath put every enemy under his feet." Surely a race, distracted by lawlessness and rebellion, may well rejoice when assured that a King so mighty and so wise ascends his rightful throne.

II. **THE SUBJECTS** of this joy. "Let Israel be glad." They who own Jesus as King are the proper persons to offer the sacrifices of rejoicing. How many are the admonitions we find in Scripture to rejoice in the reign of Immanuel! "Let all the children of Judah be joyful in their king!" With shouts of acclaim and songs of welcome do Christ's people exalt him to the throne of their loyal hearts.

III. **THE MANIFESTATIONS** of this joy. Joy is not wont to be silent. The elders and chief captains of Israel held high festival because David accepted the crown. And Christ's true subjects cannot do other than speak forth his praise and celebrate his exploits.

IV. **THE RESULTS** of this joy. If we feel the gladness which Christ's kingship is fitted to awaken, we shall find it easy to submit and to obey; we shall learn that "the joy of the Lord is our strength;" we shall have some earnest of the higher and immortal joy which shall fill the courts of heaven.

LESSONS. 1. *A rebuke to gloomy Christians.* Your faith, if you have any, must be feeble indeed if joy is a strange emotion to your heart. 2. *An encouragement to rejoicing Christians* to turn their joy into motive power, that they may aid in the culture of holiness and in the achievements of Christian service.—T.

Vers. 1—15, 19—22.—*The service of the supreme King.* In the attitude of David and in the services rendered to him at this juncture in his history we have hints as to our true bearing toward the King of kings at all times.

I. **THAT WE MAY SOMETIMES SERVE GOD BEST BY PATIENT WAITING.** For some years after David knew that he was to be King of Israel, he had to "bide his time." His duty was to "keep himself close" (ver. 1). Any positive effort to acquire the royal seat would have been premature; it would have been disloyal, and would only have defeated his own end. There are times when we have to wait for opportunity to offer (e.g. the missionaries of Madagascar until the death of the cruel Ranavalona). Patience as well as zeal is a factor in the service of the Supreme. "All things come to him who knows how to wait." Our eagerness must not run into impatience; activity should be early, but not premature.

II. **THAT IN THE ACTIVE SERVICE OF GOD WE SHOULD EMPLOY ALL OUR AVAILABLE RESOURCES.** The men of Benjamin "could use both the right hand and the left," etc. (ver. 2). "Of the Gadites there separated themselves . . . men of might, and men of war, fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler," etc. (ver. 8). These soldiers of the army of David were men that were thoroughly and perfectly equipped for their work. No mere "food for powder" were they; they were trained and skilled, competent to do all that was possible in the military achievements of the age. As soldiers in the nobler spiritual campaign for which we have enlisted, we are to be masters of the art of war; we are to be able to do all that is possible to skilled and faithful men. To be this we must: 1. Serve with all our spiritual faculties; cultivate strength and speed, be as the lion for one and as the roe for the other; we must summon all our mental and moral capabilities to the work—memory, reflection, reason, imagination, emotion, etc.; we must employ argument, wit, illustration, remonstrance, entreaty, etc. 2. Turn our physical as well as our spiritual faculties to account. 3. Know how to defend as well as to attack, how to use shield as well as sword (ver. 8). 4. Lay hold on favourable occasion (vers. 15, 19—21). And in thus putting out *all* our talents (Matt. xxv. 14—30) we must remember that (1) only patient continuance in holy effort will make us skilful and serviceable; the Benjamites must have had to go through much discipline before they could shoot as well with one hand as with the other. We must not be daunted or discouraged by the crudeness or even the clumsiness of our first attempts. (2) Faithful service will make its mark on ourselves as well as others (ver. 8); we shall acquire the lion-face, the countenance which will say, without words, "Let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Thus will the strength of our soul pass into our eye, and body and spirit will be allies *the cause of the King.*

III. THAT WE MUST BE READY TO TAKE THE PLACE FOR WHICH GOD HAS FITTED US. "Of the sons of Gad, one of the least was over an hundred, and the greatest over a thousand" (ver. 14). It is in our human nature to covet the highest place; but we are to learn of Christ—of his example and of his Word—to take with cheerfulness the humbler seat. And we may do this, not only because it is essentially Christian, but also because (1) it is right and reasonable that they who have the greater qualifications should occupy the more responsible posts; and because (2) it will contribute to our own peace and joy of heart to have as much as, *but no more than*, we are able to execute placed in our hands.

IV. THAT THE CAUSE OF GOD IS ONE THAT GATHERS STRENGTH BY CONTINUAL ACCESSION. (Ver. 22.) There may come times in the history of the great spiritual struggle in which the Church is occupied when large accessions are made to the ranks of God. But this triumph has been preceded by long, incessant toil; moreover, it is not the rule, but the exception. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation;" it is "day by day" that souls come in, until the army of the great King is made and the "host of God" is complete.—C.

Vers. 16-18.—*The offer of the upright*, etc. These verses suggest—

I. THE OFFER OF THE UPRIGHT. (Ver. 17.) David made this offer to the men of Benjamin and Judah in good faith. He did not mean one thing in the moment of danger, and another in the hour of security. He fully intended the thing he said; he was prepared, in the event of this band of men coming over to his side, to regard them with perfect favour and to give them a good place in his ranks. The maintenance of all our social activities depends on trustworthiness between man and man; therefore on honesty of thought and integrity of word and deed in ordinary as well as extraordinary occasions. When uprightness is gone and confidence undermined, all security has vanished and everything is in confusion. The engagements of daily life, of trade and commerce, of all human industry, rest on morality and ultimately on religion.

II. THE RESOURCE OF THE DEVOUT. (Ver. 17.) When David "went out to meet" those men, he placed himself (as I read the story) in their power. He made them an offer which they might accept or not. Accepting it, they would reinforce his army and strengthen his position; refusing it, they might avail themselves of his venture and get him into their power. This latter alternative he vigorously deprecates; but if they should abuse his confidence he has one resource—the appeal to God. "If ye be come to betray me to mine enemies . . . the God of our fathers . . . rebuke it." In the last extremity the devout man can fall back on Divine interposition: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us . . . and he will deliver us" (Dan. iii. 17). Things can never be so bad with the servants of righteousness but they have one valuable resource—the appeal to God, his rebuke of the guilty, his succour of the upright. But it is only those who can say, "Seeing there is no wrong in mine hands," who have a consciousness of rectitude and reconciliation, that have this refuge in the hour of need.

III. THE DECISION, INVOCATION, AND ACQUISITION OF THE WISE. (Ver. 18.) 1. The decision of the wise. Those who know what it is best to do will join themselves, not to the cause of the man who has forsaken God and whom he has forsaken—the party of Saul, but to the side of him who serves God and whom he helps—the party of David. He whom "his God helpeth" is the champion to whom we should attach ourselves and our interests. 2. The invocation of the wise. "Peace, peace be unto thee and . . . unto thine helpers." The thoughtless and "shallow-hearted" may wish for their friends the cup of pleasure, or a sceptre of power, or a wreath of glory; the wiser heart desires peace. There is no blessing so true, profound, abiding, as peace of mind, rest of heart, stillness of soul in God. 3. And this is the acquisition of the wise. "Peace be unto thee, . . . for thy God helpeth thee." If God be the Helper of our soul, as he is ready to be, as he will be to those who earnestly and perseveringly seek his aid; if he grant the helpful influence of his illumining, renewing, sanctifying, comforting Spirit, there will be peace, "great peace"—the "peace which passeth understanding," the peace of Christ himself (John xiv. 27).—C.

Vers. 23-31, 33-40.—"Joy in (the) Israel (of God)." A right joyous scene was thus described in the concluding verses of this chapter. Never, probably, in the three

and thirty years of his subsequent life did David sit down to his table in the royal palace at Jerusalem with so much gladness of heart as he did this day at Hebron. Never, probably, did the thousands of Israel gather at such a jubilant assembly as when they met "to make David king," and were with him "three days eating and drinking" (vers. 38, 39). The event justified their joy. They had every promise of national peace, prosperity, security. They were on the eve of a new era, in which their race would take a position and enjoy a heritage to which it had long looked forward, which had been long delayed, but which should now meet and crown their brightest hopes. They had four elements of strength; four sources, therefore, of satisfaction. 1. *Large numbers.* (Vers. 24—37.) "Six thousand eight hundred;" "seven thousand one hundred," etc.—in all more than three hundred and thirty thousand. 2. *Discipline and equipment.* The bands were "ready armed" (vers. 23, 24, 37, 38); many were "mighty men of valour" (ver. 30); many were "expert in war" (vers. 33, 35, 36). 3. *Enthusiasm.* "They were not of double heart;" they were undivided, single-minded, thorough (vers. 33, 38). 4. *Wisdom.* For they were doing the right thing for their country's welfare; they were acting "according to the word of the Lord" (ver. 23). Here was the strongest of all reasons for congratulation and joy, the surest pledge of national prosperity. That there may be "joy in the Israel of God," in the Christian Church, that there may be a sense of assured victory and of security, there need be these four elements of strength; they are all of value, though not of equal worth.

I. **THERE IS STRENGTH IN NUMBERS IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST.** A great multitude of men *may be* of very little account; a miscellaneous assembly is not an army. Nevertheless, it is better that the people of the Lord should be counted by thousands rather than by hundreds. There is more heart to praise God when the church is filled than when it is scantily attended. Many labourers are better than few in the harvest-field of Christian toil (Matt. ix. 37, 38).

II. **THERE IS GREATER STRENGTH IN DISCIPLINE AND CONSEQUENT PREPAREDNESS.** Ten men well armed and "expert in war" will do more than ten times their number unarmed or ill armed and without knowledge of the way to strike; this is true in moral as well as in material contests, in Christian effort as well as in the "science of war." Christ has need, not only of those who, untrained, do the best they can at the moment, but of those also who, by careful discipline of mind and heart, have "bought up the opportunity," and can do well—can speak nobly, can devise skilfully, can execute admirably in the day of conflict.

III. **THERE IS EQUAL STRENGTH IN ENTHUSIASM.** Not to "have a heart and a heart" (ver. 33, margin), but to be of one undivided mind, one fixed, ardent, resolute soul; to be fired by an earnest purpose; to be eager for the work; to be inspired by an impelling, exalting devotion to the great King;—this is the source of power; this will carry everything before it. And yet is there one other element of more essential moment still.

IV. **THE GREATEST SOURCE OF STRENGTH AND SECURITY IS IN A WISE OBEDIENCE.** Everything will fail, however large the number, careful the culture, fervent the spirit, if there be not the "doing of the will of the Father who is in heaven"—if the commandment of Christ be disregarded. "Should it be according to his mind," it will be well; otherwise the brightest hopes will disappear in the darkness. In all our projects, methods, enterprises for the extension of his kingdom, we must proceed "according to the Word of the Lord" (ver. 23). Then will the issue be like that at Hebron on this gladsome occasion. We do not feast now as then, "three days eating and drinking," but we have, or may have, our joyous times, when the work and the will of the Lord are done, when a sense of unity and security is in the soul, and we look forward to a bright and victorious future in the service of the Son of David.—C.

Ver. 32.—Spiritual sagacity. It is a very high encomium which the sacred writer passes on these "children of Issachar," that they were men "that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." They were men that had insight, who could see beneath the surface, who could look on beyond the events of the hour—men of sagacity and penetration. Such men are always needed.

I. **THE SAGACITY THAT WAS NEEDED THEN.** What was most urgently required of the leaders of the tribes in those early times was: 1. Which dynasty to support—whether

the house of Saul or that of David. When so much hung on the will of the reigning monarch, that was a vital question. 2. What steps to take to establish the national unity. In presence of the unconquered Philistines and of other neighbouring powers, this unity of Israel was of immense, indeed of essential, importance. 3. What attitude to assume toward the national enemies—whether of submission, compromise, or unmitigated hostility. 4. What position to take up respecting non-Mosaic usages—whether to permit the adoption of any social, political, religious customs by Israel, or to abide with strict severity by the letter of the Sinaitic commandment. Such were the questions which then demanded a practical answer, and concerning which the men of Issachar “had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.”

II. THE SAGACITY THAT IS NECESSARY NOW. Those men of God, those servants of Jesus Christ, who can be said to deserve this eulogy are they who have the sagacity to discern: 1. What special perils are threatening the integrity or progress of the Church of Christ, and how they shall be averted. 2. What particular aspect of Christian truth needs to be insisted on and enforced at the hour to which the Church has come. 3. How to present the old and everlasting truth in the language, and how to accommodate the forms of Christian worship to the tastes, of the time without compromise and unfaithfulness. 4. What is the next citadel of error or evil which the tribes of Christian Israel shall attack. 5. How to apply Christian ethics to the domestic, social, commercial, political questions of the hour. 6. What is the relation which the Church of Christ shall assume or resume to the state—whether of government, alliance, or independence and separation. 7. What form the unity of the Church shall take—whether organic and visible or spiritual and invisible. 8. What are the best remedial measures that can be taken for the elevation of the ignorant and immoral, and for the ingathering of the heathen into the fold of Christ.—C.

Vers. 1—22.—*David's mighty men: the Gadites, Benjamites, and Judah.* This chapter contains three lists of those who joined the standard while he yet kept himself close because of the jealousy of Saul. While he was in the Philistine town of Ziklag these joined him in rapid succession, and they afterwards contributed so much to the glory of his reign. Preferring the exile and reproach of David to the honour of the court of Saul they gave up all for love to him. Vers. 1—15 give us the first list; vers. 16—22 the second list; vers. 23—40 the third list. The children of Benjamin joining his standard must have been peculiarly grateful to David. These were of the kindred of Saul, and included probably many of his relatives. They could only have joined David's standard under the influence of the Spirit of God, perceiving the evident withdrawal of God's favours from Saul and his favour to David. It was a public and emphatic protest by those who had means of knowing David better than others of the excellence of his character and the grievous wrong done by outlawing one who had rendered such eminent services. We see how David was naturally suspicious of these Benjamites joining him. In order to remove David's suspicion of their being traitors from the house of Saul, they had probably asked the children of Judah to accompany them (vers. 16—18). The Spirit of God, speaking through Amasai, removed all fears. David's confidence in God in an extremity which might have been fatal to his life and the existence of his kingdom, is instructive. He casts himself upon God. A “good conscience” enables him to do this, “seeing there is no wrong in mine hands.” With a “good conscience” towards God, men may never fear in any emergency, however trying. The Spirit of the Lord will always lead the way. Though the cloud may hang very long and look very dark, the result is as certain as the most certain thing in the world. To such a soul there will be one final issue—“peace peace” (ver. 18); yes, “perfect peace” (Isa. xxvi. 3) to all such.—W.

Ver. 18.—*David's mighty men: motive for service.* Let us now glance at the motive of these noble men who joined David's standard. Despising the court of Saul and all its honours, they were drawn to David. His exile and reproach were dearer to them than it all. And why? Instructed by the Spirit of God, they recognized the Lord's anointed. They looked not at the present, but forward to that hour when the king should reign. For this they counted all the honours of Saul as worthless. They esteemed David's reproach because they had respect to his future glory. Need I say

what this teaches? The people of God now are gathered round Jesus, the rejected One, the Exile from this world. They esteem the reproach of Christ, for they have respect to the recompense of the reward. "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." They "know whom they have believed." "The heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing." The world has set itself against Christ. Yet they know, notwithstanding all this, that "the Lord hath set his King on his holy hill of Zion." Jesus is that King. And his love has drawn them out from this world's ruler and god, and with joy they move onward under the "Captain of their salvation."—W.

Vers. 23-40.—David's mighty men: description and character. What is the character of these followers of David? Are they mere followers? Nay, in very deed they are soldiers, warriors to the very death. They fight David's battles. They stand in the breach, in the forefront. They "loved not their lives to the death," "warring a good warfare" in the service of him who loved them and attachment to whom has drawn them out. Mark their character: "men of valour;" "ready armed;" "expert in war;" "famous in the house of their fathers;" not "double-hearted;" of "one heart;" of "perfect heart;" men who could "keep rank;" who could use "all instruments of war;" who "could use both hands;" who were "swift as roes;" who had "faces like lions;" and "men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." Blessed and noble warriors gathered round the exiled David! No wonder it is called "a great host, like the host of God." It is such the true David seeks now. These are the men who do honour to our exiled "King of kings and Lord of lords." These are they who shall reign in glory with him ere long. They are men who sit not down at ease because they are just saved from hell. They do not make salvation from everlasting death their *end*, but their *beginning*—their motive, their power, their strength for the fight. They know what the Spirit meant when he said, "To him that *overcometh* will I grant to sit with me on my throne." Thank God, we have such men in the Church now, though very few. Reader, are you one of them? Oh, rest not satisfied with being *just saved*! Aim at these features. Be not of "double heart." Aim at "one-heartedness"—at a perfect heart. Be "ready armed." Be able to "keep rank," to walk with those who walk with God. Use "both hands"—every affection, every desire, every aim, every pound. Let everything, little and great, in your hourly history be consecrated to God. Have a "face like a lion" against all evil, and stand up for Christ. Be as "swift as a roe" for everything that concerns your Saviour's glory and the blessing of others. "Run swiftly" the race set before you, "looking unto Jesus." And ask God that, when the Church is trembling, and truth is failing, and hearts on all sides are quaking, and the true Israel of God knoweth not what to do, you may have "understanding of the times, to know what you ought to do."—W.

Vers. 16-18.—Friends in adversity. David appeared to have reached an extremity when he was compelled to escape from Gath and find shelter in the *cave*, hold, or possible *fortress* of Adullam. His fortunes then seemed to be at their lowest, and at first he must have felt utterly friendless and forsaken. Soon, however, his immediate relatives heard where he was, and presently those discontented with Saul's rule gathered to him. The verses on which we are now dwelling narrate an incident connected with this assembling of people round David, and the point of interest is that among them some Benjamites came, who should properly have belonged to the party of Saul, and David found it necessary to put their friendliness to some testing. The incident may introduce the subject of human friendship. We note—

I. TIMES OF ADVERSITY TAKE AWAY OUR SEEMING FRIENDS. Many so-called friends are but "fair-weather friends," sharers of our prosperity and success. Really friends for the sake of what they can get by it. Illustration may be found in the parable of the prodigal son. When his money was gone his friends had gone too.

II. TIMES OF ADVERSITY FIND OUT THE TRUE AMONG OUR FRIENDS. The test shows which are the faithful ones. They are not often the boastful and forward ones. Often they are those whom we have almost neglected. The true brother is "born to adversity," and only blossoms out in the shady night-times of calamity.

III. TIMES OF ADVERSITY SURPRISE US WITH THE FRIENDS THEY BRING TO US. Beyond proving who are our real friends, they actually bring us new and unexpected friends, such as are really concerned for us and are full of earnest purpose to help us. Often we say that it is worth while getting into trouble, if only for the sake of the friends we find and prove.

IV. TIMES OF ADVERSITY, ABOVE ALL THINGS ELSE, PROVE THE FAITHFULNESS OF OUR BEST FRIEND; he of whom it may truly be said, "He sticketh closer than a brother." He is indeed the Example of the *man in adversity*; and from his case we see how *all forsook him and fled*, even St. John not venturing to plead for him. And so Paul at the judgment-seat was alone, but he found the faithfulness of the best Friend: "Nevertheless the Lord stood by me."—R. T.

Vers. 22, 23.—One increasing, another decreasing. So constant and so extensive were the accessions to David's party, that any observer would have said, "It is evident that Saul is going down and David is going up. This David is the man of the future." When it is seen in which direction the tide is flowing, every one hurries to take advantage of it, hoping to float on it to his own fortune. But this very common process, which may be observed in the various spheres of life any day, is *here* connected with the Divine purposes and promises. Silently, it may even be said *naturally*, the nation was coming round to the acceptance of God's arrangement for it. Men may say that the political change was sufficiently accounted for by political considerations. Scripture shows us in all the outworkings of the Divine will (1 Sam. xvi. 13). The instance in which the rising of one and the decline of another was piously and submissively accepted by the declining one, is that of our Lord and John the Baptist. It is John himself who, clearly seeing the preparatory character of his own work, and the permanent glory of the mission of the Lamb of God, says, "He must increase, but I must decrease." This success of one and failure of another, this success of one *resting upon* the very failure of another, is one of the most ordinary facts of life. It may be painful and oppressive, or it may become a cause of submissive joy, according to the side from which we view it.

I. IT WILL BE PAINFUL TO US IF WE ARE MORE CONCERNED FOR SELF THAN FOR GOD. If a man limits his vision to his own immediate and personal interests, anything like failure must be to him unmitigated distress. He knows no side whence relief can come. Failure can take on no gracious shapes; it can be nothing but miserable failure. Yet is "success for self" the end of life? Can we isolate ourselves from the Divine plan for all? Would it really be well for the individual if he could? And may not God's great plan for the *whole* involve, in its outworking, some disabilities for the few?—especially if he counts the highest good, the only real good, to be good of *character*, not of circumstances? If we are more anxious for God than for self, then it need never be hard for us, at his bidding and under his lead, to step down into seeming failure, second places, and disabilities. We may see others go on before us to places of honour, quietly assured that our God knows they may serve him *up there* better than we could do.

II. IT WILL BE PAINFUL TO US IF WE FAIL TO RECOGNIZE THAT ONE MAN'S WORK PREPARES FOR ANOTHER. And so that which seems low down, simple, and humble in character, may be truly honourable and important, because of its preparatory character. David was humbled by God's refusal to allow him to build his temple; but David could prepare for, and so have a true part in, the success of Solomon. The same may be said of John the Baptist. It did not matter that his particular mission failed when its work was done, and it had prepared the way for the Messiah. Those who only do preparing work must fully accept the fact that, in the world's eye, their life will seem to be a failure; it may even be so to their own view, but God "seeth not as man seeth," and has his gracious ways of setting "last ones first."

III. IT WILL BE PAINFUL TO US IF WE FAIL TO REALIZE THAT REWARDS COME FOR WHAT A MAN IS, AND NOT MERELY FOR WHAT HE DOES. Herein Divine rewards so materially differ from human ones. Man can only recognize what is done, or attained, and he gives his rewards for achievement. God searches into the motive and the character, and gives his rewards for *what the man is prov'd to be in the doing*. Success is not necessary to the best character; finer qualities gain expression and culture in failure, disappointment, and trouble. Results may be reached under conditions that involve no

nobility of character. It is still very largely true that "deep in the valleys rest, the Spirit's gifts most holy," and heaven may have its welcome rather for poor disabled Lazarus at the gate than for prosperous and luxurious Dives on the silken couch at the sumptuous board. God sets some of us low down and keeps us there, because he puts *faithfulness* far above success.

IV. IT WILL BE PAINFUL TO US IF WE REFUSE TO ADMIT THAT DIVINE JUDGMENTS COME IN THE REMOVAL OF MEN FROM PLACES OF HONOUR AND TRUST; as was the case with King Saul. So now, God deals with his people; sickness sets them aside from the path of ambition. Their best efforts again and again end in failure. And true hearts will not fail to see in such things Divine judgments; solemn recognitions of failings in motive and spirit; holy callings back to the humble and trustful dependences; awakenings to the conviction that a man prospers only "as his soul prospers." Then, when others go on past us to wealth, position, and honour, when they increase and we decrease, may we even rejoice? Yes; if we really care more for God than for self, and more for others than for self. We should be ever ready to stand in the chieftest places, if God would have us stand in them. But we should be quite as willing to stand down and let another take our place, if God would set him up. The disabilities of life *may* involve our "decreasing;" but the time *must* come when from our hands the tools and the weapons must fall, and, empty handed, we pass into the eternal world. Then others must step into our places, and it will be well for us if, when our *works* are burned up, we ourselves are saved, "yet so as by fire." Of this we may be sure, if we failed to win or to keep what we thought our right place in this world, in the next God will put us just where we should be in view of what, in character and spirit, we have been able to win through the failures or successes of our human life.—R. T.

Vers. 23—40.—*The hearts of all men are in God's hands.* When the proper time came for the promise made to David to be fulfilled, no efforts were needed to secure the throne. One difficulty after another faded away. One section after another of the people came to offer their allegiance. And the signs of God's gracious moving of men's hearts towards David in due time were seen, in the devotion of themselves and their wealth and property to his service. The men of might came, and offered him their weapons, their skill, and their lives. The men of understanding came, and offered him their counsel and powers of rule and magistracy. The men of wealth came, and offered abundant provisions for the host thus gathering round David (ver. 40). Compare the consecration of property in the early Pentecostal days. Often in life we are made to feel that the *circumstances* of life are in God's hands, and we recognize his wonder-working in the removal of our difficulties and the opening of our path; but even when we seem to be hindered by the action of our fellow-men, we do not see that *their hearts* are in God's hands, and that, in answer to our prayer and in fulfilment of his purposes, he can move men's feelings and sway them as he may please. Yet this is the fuller and truer view of life; until we can worthily realize this we do not truly say, "Our times are in thy hands." "He maketh the wrath of man praise him, and the remainder of wrath he can restrain."

I. A MAN'S HEART CONTROLS HIS USE OF HIS THINGS. To the Divine view, "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." By the term "heart" is included a man's plans, purposes, and feelings. It may stand for his disposition. Then illustrate how all *conduct, relations, and uses of property, etc.*, are toned by the heart of the *covetous, the selfish, the prejudiced, the envious, the suspicious, or the unforgiving man*. It is hopeless work to try and change the fixed habits of any man's life. Our hope lies in *change of heart*, and that will ensure the needed change in the outward relations. Therefore our Lord proposes, in his redemptive work, to recover and set right the *very heart of men*. His law is thus expressed: "Ye must be born again."

II. A MAN'S HEART IS OPEN TO DIVINE INFLUENCES. We often feel how difficult it is, as we say, to *get at* a man. Do what we will, we seem to be *outside* him. Now, the heart is just the sphere that is always open to Divine influence. It may please God to withdraw and hold himself aloof from a man; but if he pleases to enter, no man can shut his heart's door against him. He may enter for conviction and for judgment, as well as for persuasion and guidance. If men's attitude towards us is a *use of trouble*, we may be comforted by the assurance that the Master of all human

hearts, who is our God, permits it only as long as he pleases, and will change it when he thinks best. With this assurance, no wrong-doing of our fellow-men need unduly distress us.

III. A MAN IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS DEALING WITH GOD'S INWARD LEADINGS. This, indeed, is his deepest responsibility. He has an inward voice; he is bound to heed it above all. He has Divine impulses; does he *crush* them or follow them? Heart-hardening chiefly comes in one way, by resisting the Divine lead; or, in New Testament phraseology, "quenching the Spirit;" "resisting the Holy Ghost." Divine impulses may be (1) resisted; (2) covered over with self-interests; (3) neglected; or (4) watched for; and (5) followed.

IV. HEART-IMPLESSES, DULY FOLLOWED, FIND EXPRESSION IN CONDUCT; as all these men came, bringing themselves and all they had to David, when they were under Divine constraintings. So we shall be ready to give self and wealth to all holy uses, if we are inwardly moved of God. Illustrate from the Lord Jesus: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." St. Paul's "The love of Christ constraineth us." Learn what is the sphere of *our* prayer for others—viz. that God would move their hearts; and what is our *hope in doing Christian work*, it is "touched hearts."—R. T.

Ver. 32.—"Understanding of the times." It is remarked as peculiarly the characteristic of the men of Issachar, that they had "understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." We should call them "men of political sagacity." "They excelled in moral and political prudence and wisdom, so as to know what, in any season of emergency, the particular posture of affairs required to be done." We are to understand that these wise men approved of the elevation of David to the throne. The *whole* of human capacity is for Divine uses. Every faculty and power should be laid on the Divine altar. Some powers are natural, others are developed by the circumstances and experiences of life; but all may be and should be cultivated into the highest practical efficiency. No man has the right to withhold from the service of his fellow-men, and so from the service of God, any talent, faculty, capacity, or power of influence that he may possess. Among the Divine trusts are the gifts and insight of the statesman, and these find spheres in the lesser scenes of local government and social order, as well as in the state. Men are fitted in the *lesser* places for the *greater*. And their influence in every sphere bears directly on the *moral* and *social*, and often also upon the *religious*, good of the people. The work of the statesman may be thus defined, and each point may be illustrated from *times* and *men* taken from ancient and modern history. 1. To see below the surface-appearances and the loud outcries of partisans, what is the real want of the times. 2. To devise the schemes which will hopefully meet both the present necessity and demands, and also provide for possible, but at present unforeseen, developments. 3. To choose the time for action which may prove most efficient, and to wisely delay, even at the peril of being misrepresented. 4. To estimate fairly the *wholes*, not the *parts*, of a subject; and so to act for all parties and above party. Such men are raised up in every age. Their service fits into the Divine plan for the race. This gift is also from the Lord, and what the world so greatly needs is *its use in full loyalty to him*.—R. T.

Vers. 33—38.—*Single-mindedness.* Two significant expressions are used: (1) "They were not of double heart;" (2) "Came with a perfect heart." Scripture ever makes much of *sincerity, whole-heartedness*. The prophet complains of the people that "their heart is divided." This is a most searching reproach, "They feared the Lord, and served other gods." Our Lord pleaded with men on the impossibility of "serving God and Mammon." And the Apostle James has severe reproaches for the "double-minded man." Practical life supports Scripture in its commendation of *single-mindedness*. The men who *do one thing*, and put their hearts into the doing, are the men of influence and success; the kind of men we are always looking for in every department of life; the good servants and the good masters in every sphere. Those who undertake too much, and are ever skipping from one thing to another, make nothing successful, and fail to win and hold our confidence. The point of excellence in the men introduced in these verses is that "they would set the battle in array with no double heart;" and, in respect of allegiance to David, never permitted the slightest

suspicion of their integrity to arise. The word "perfect" is often used in Scripture as the equivalent of "whole," "entire," "complete." "Mark the perfect man;" "Be ye therefore perfect;" "As many as be perfect."

I. SINGLE-MINDEDNESS IS A GREAT SECRET OF SUCCESS IN LIFE. More so now than ever it was, seeing that advanced civilization demands division of labour, and a man can only hope to reach efficiency in one department. Remarkable instances of success achieved on single lines and in particular departments are constantly being given. In science men gain the power of efficiency and exactness by keeping to one branch of a subject; and whatever may be the line in which a young man begins his business or studious life, he should be encouraged to keep on in it and achieve success in it. The law of triumph is—This one thing; and this earnestly.

II. SINGLE-MINDEDNESS IS THE CONDITION OF ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD. Illustrate by Elijah's appeal, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Or, "How long will ye be like a restless bird, hopping from twig to twig?" Or from Balaam, who wanted to obey God, but wanted also the offered rewards. Or from Ananias and Sapphira, who wanted the credit of unusually devoted disciples, but wanted also to keep their property. *Sincerity* assures the Divine regard. This is the first condition of acceptance. Recognizing this, David prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me." And the apostle has a striking Greek term for the proper attitude of a Christian: he is one who does not fear to be judged standing out in the sunlight (*ekikraneis*). But this *sincerity* costs the earnest man his gravest anxieties, because (1) of the peril of *self-deception*; (2) the *subtleties of the temptations offered by the self*; and (3) the constant discovery of *mixed motives* even in the holiest things.

Impress that the unity of our whole being in the love and service of One so worthy, and able so thoroughly to absorb all, as the Lord Jesus Christ, ensures this single-mindedness as nothing else can. It should not be difficult for any of us to be *wholly his*, and accept our life as the sphere of a single-minded and sincere obedience to him. Remember Wellington's answer to the officer who attempted to argue a point with him, "Sir, we do not wish you to argue, but to obey." He had one thing to do,—enough if he did it well. Compare St. Paul's "To me to live is Christ."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIII.

The opening verses of this chapter explain and amplify the compressed announcement of 2 Sam. vi. 1, "Again, David gathered together all the chosen of Israel, thirty thousand." And the remaining verses (6-14) cover the same ground as 2 Sam. vi. 2-11.

Ver. 1.—There can be little doubt that the captains of thousands and hundreds . . . with every leader, here spoken of, represented what had become by this time a confirmed institution, although in embryo, dating from the time of Moses at least (Numb. xxxi. 14; Deut. i. 15; Judg. xx. 7; 2 Chron. xx. 21).

Ver. 2.—Left in all the land. Some think that this phrase points to the destruction that had been widespread by the Philistines.

Ver. 3.—Let us bring again the ark. It had been removed from Shiloh (Josh. xviii. 1) at the instance of "the elders of Israel" to their camp, when they were hard pressed and smitten by the Philistines (1 Sam. iv. 1-4); there it was taken by the Philistines

(1 Sam. iv. 11, 22), and hurried from Ashdod to Ekron and on to Bethshemesh (1 Sam. v. 1, 5, 8, 10; vi. 9-13). For we inquired not at it in the days of Saul. The allusion may be considered delicately worded, but an inexpressible pathos and unmeasured condemnation must be imagined as clinging to this sentence, illustrated further by 1 Sam. vii. 2; xxviii. 6, 15, 16; ch. x. 14.

Ver. 5.—All Israel. The parallel gives the number as thirty thousand men (2 Sam. vi. 1, 2). Shihor of Egypt. According to Gesenius, this Shihor is from root *רְחֹרֶה* meaning "to be turbid" or "black" (so Latin *melo*, from the Greek; Virgil, 'Georg.', iv. 278, 291; Catullus, lxvii. 33). There can surely be little doubt that it is the river Nile which is here spoken of, after comparison of the following passages:—Josh. xiii. 3; Isa. xxiii. 3; Jer. ii. 18. Though others, quoting Josh. xiii. 3 and xix. 26, and interpreting Shihor generically as applicable to any dark, turbid stream, make it the modern *Wady el-Arish*. However, the parallel, 1 Kings viii. 65, does not necessarily disprove

the 'נִיר from 'נִיר of Egypt (Gen. xv. 18), but rather tends to identify them. The entering of Hamath; i.e. the way to Hamath (Hebrew, הַמַּתָּה; Numb. xxxiv. 7, 8). Hamath was one of the great cities of the Orontes valley, in Upper Syria, which formed the boundary in especial of the empire of Solomon. This valley is watered by the Orontes, the river of Antioch, a river remarkable for its abundant spring (situate immediately north of the source of the Leontes), which won for it the name, among all the other springs of Syria, of "The Spring," and remarkable for "the length of its course, the volume of its waters, and the rich vegetation of its banks." It is the one of the four rivers which take their rise beneath the heights of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon which becomes really worthy of the name of river, the other three, viz. the Jordan, the Leontes or modern *Litany* of Phoenicia, and the Abana or modern *Barada* of Damascus, more resembling the nature of the mountain stream. This river was to the ancient Romans "the representative of Syria, as the Thames might be said to be of England, and in later times the region formed the chief point of contact between this part of Asia and the West" (Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 414, e, f, edit. 1866). The kingdom of Hamath comprised the tract of this valley of the Orontes, skirted by the hills separating the Leontes from the Orontes, and extending to the Pass of Daphne below Antioch. *Riblah* (Numb. xxxiv. 11; 2 Kings xxiii. 33) lies on the east bank of the Orontes, thirty-five miles north-east of Baal-bek, or Baalgad. The people of Hamath were of the race of Ham, of the descendants of Canaan (Gen. x. 18), and are not to be reckoned as of Phoenician origin.

Ver. 6.—To Baalah, that is, to Kirjath-jearim (see Josh. xv. 9—11; 1 Sam. iv.—vii.; 2 Sam. vi. 2; where the name is spelt with a final *yod* instead of *he*). A third name of this same place, Kirjath-baal, is found in Josh. xv. 60; xviii. 14. Probably the present 'Arza, a ruin (e.g. Kirjath-arim, Ezra ii. 25) on the brink of the valley of Sorek, may be the place (see Conder's 'Bible Handbook,' p. 419, 2nd edit.). We read in Josh. ix. 17—27 how the men of Kirjath-jearim had been made by Joshua "hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord." Hither to this Kirjath-jearim the ark had been conveyed from Bethshemesh (1 Sam. vii. 1, 2), and here it "abode" long time, "for it was twenty years." Perhaps the word "abode" in this passage may be equivalent to abode *unmoved* (1 Sam. xiv. 18, 19). For though the chronology from the death of Eli, through the remainder of Samuel's career and of Saul's, seems almost hopelessly

uncertain, yet it would appear certain that the interval exceeded twenty years, to the time that David now takes in hand to bring home, as it were, the ark. The ark of God, the Lord. Though the Authorized Version of this passage is better and clearer than that of the parallel (2 Sam. vi. 2), yet it is left somewhat obscure. The comma should follow the name God. Jehovah sitting upon the cherubim then follows as a clause in apposition, while the last three words (*as the name is called*, rather than *whose name*) state that clause to contain "the Name of the Lord" (Deut. x. 8; xxxi. 9; 1 Sam. iv. 4; v. 3; vi. 8). Bertheau, following Theinius, proposes to change the Hebrew נִיר into נִיר. But there are abundant objections to this.

Ver. 7.—They carried; the Authorized Version of the parallel "they set." But the verb is the Hiph. of נִיר, a word carrying more of majesty in its use (Deut. xxxiii. 26; Job xxx. 22; Ps. xviii. 11; lxviii. 38; Isa. xix. 1). A new cart. The stress laid on the newness of this cart, the term being twice repeated in the parallel passage, may justly remind of Mark xi. 2; Matt. xxvii. 60 (see 'Speaker's Commentary' on 2 Sam. vi. 3). The house of Abinadab. There is no mention of Abinadab that would indicate that he still lived, even when twenty years before, the ark was placed in his house. Eleazar was his eldest son (1 Sam. vii. 1), and was "sanctified to keep the ark of the Lord." Uzza and Ahio were possibly sons of Eleazar, and not sons of Abinadab, and Eleazar's younger brothers. The Septuagint translates *Ahio*, and accordingly reads, "Uzza and his brethren drove the cart."

Ver. 8.—Played before God. The Hebrew word is the Piel of פִּירָא, the root of which, from the simplest meaning of "to laugh" (and with the two appropriate prepositions used for laughing with an expression of derision or contempt), through the two further meanings of "sporting" and "jesting," passes to the signification of "dancing" (1 Sam. xviii. 7; Jer. xxxi. 4). Its deepest idea seems to be "to make merry," and to savour of the very same ambiguity attaching to that idiom with ourselves. The parallel of this passage exhibits "before the Lord." With all their might. See the evident mistake of the parallel ("on all manner of instruments made of firwood," literally, *with all firwoods*) through similarity of the Hebrew characters. Cymbals and . . . trumpets. Of the five names of musical instruments, the same in number in both passages, the first three are the same in the Hebrew, but these last two are different words, בְּכָנְזָבָבָם בְּכָנְזָבָבָם here for בְּכָנְזָבָבָם. A variation of this particular kind again

indicates with some decisiveness the different character and the number of the sources from which the writers of the Books of Samuel and those of Chronicles took.

Ver. 9.—The threshingfloor of Chidon. For Chidon, the parallel place has *Nachon*; possibly these are two names of the same place, or one form is a corruption of the other; but there is nothing to determine for us which. Owing to the meaning of *Nachon* being “prepared,” the version of Aquila is “to the prepared threshingfloor,” with which the Jonathan Targum agrees, and (for this Chronicles passage) the Joseph Targum gives *לְמִזְבֵּחַ*. The threshingfloor was a circular plot of hard ground, from fifty to one hundred feet in diameter, on which the oxen trampled out the grain. Threshingfloors evidently often became landmarks, and helped to designate places (Gen. 1. 10; 2 Sam. xxiv. 16). The oxen stumbled. In the parallel place the Authorized Version renders “shook it.” The Hebrew verb is the same (*מִזְבֵּחַ*) in both places. Its elementary meanings are “to strike” and “to throw down.” Perhaps the meaning is near the Vulgate rendering, *calcitrabant*, and equivalent to the rendering, *became restive*.

Ver. 10.—There seems some little uncertainty as to why Uzza was to blame in a desire that would appear both praiseworthy and instinctive, to steady the ark or save it from actually falling. Uzza was probably not a priest or Levite, and it is so distinctly said his sin consisted in putting his hand to the ark, that perhaps the direction of Numb. iv. 15 may be sufficient account of the matter. Special injunction had been given

(Exod. xxv. 14, 15) that the poles with which to bear it should not be taken out of the rings, but be always stationary there. If we suppose that it was *not* a question of the ark being absolutely overthrown, but simply of its riding unsteadily, his presumptuousness would *not* have the further defence of an instinctive impulse.

Ver. 11.—Displeased. The Hebrew root (*תָּמַרְתָּ*) betokens a mixture of anger and grief. It is the word used of Jonah (iv. 1, 9), and perhaps our English word “ vexed” or “hurt,” would convey its meaning. Had made a breach; literally, *had broken forth a breaking forth on Uzza*; i.e. had fiercely broken forth on Uzza. There are many exactly analogous uses of both verb and noun in the Hebrew. To this day. This phrase, also found in the parallel place, indicates the lapse of time from the historical point of time to the point of record.

Ver. 13.—Obed-edom the Gittite. That Obed-edom is called “the Gittite,” i.e. of Gath-rimmon, a Levite city of Dan (Josh. xxi. 24), might probably indicate that there was another Obed-edom, from whom to distinguish him. Such a one would appear readily to offer in the name of Obed-edom, son of Jeduthun, a “Merarite Levite” (ch. xv. 18-22; xvi. 5, 38; xxvi. 4-15). But the difficulty occurs that an expression in this last quotation seems to identify him with the Obed-edom of 2 Sam. vi. 11; and the last sentence of our next verse. If they are one and the same, it has been suggested that marriage might account for the Merarite living in a Kohathite city (see ‘Speaker’s Commentary’ on 2 Sam. vi. 10).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-14.—*The chapter of reverse; or, the good enterprise of a good man overthrown in a day.* Before viewing this chapter in any detail, there is a general impression which it makes, and that, though general, yet not vague, but of a commanding sort. Here is, so to put it, a certain day in a man’s life, an important day, one looked for and consecrated to high end. It rose bright and its joy spread. With intense activity the work is set about, and it is at all events designed and superintended by a good man, though it is not possible that he should, in his own person, carry out every detail of it. That great day ended in disappointment and disaster. And though the proximate cause of this reverse of all that was intended, hoped, and prayed for is plainly enough told, the providence that permitted it in place of preventing it seems obscure. Such days happen in not a few lives, not least in the lives of men in exalted and responsible position. They produce sometimes a wounded spirit, a sense of aggravation and of intense disappointment and grief. Large thought, large care, large love, seem to have been thrown away and rebuffed. And though fault may have been, yet that fault, the fault of a mere subordinate, visits its worst effects upon the chief persons involved in the enterprise, or on a whole community, or upon both. It may throw some light on such disappointments and catastrophes in our own experience or under our own immediate observation if we view them at a little greater distance and as they befall others. Notice, then—

I. THE ENTERPRISE ITSELF AND THE NATURE OF IT. It is to bring again the ark to some place of right, of honour, of influence. **1.** To bring it back to the royal city was

only to give it (1) the place that belonged to it of right; (2) the place that for honour it merited; (3) the place where it would be likely to be most influential. Even the ark out of sight was only too liable to be proportionately out of mind. There is, therefore, nothing of the nature of a mere empty demonstrativeness in the activity of David and his people. Of national, historic, and revealed sanction, what they sought to do that day was the proper thing to do. Again, it was something more than merely the becoming thing to do. 2. It was a holy thought and a holy deed. For the ark was a symbol of the highest kind; it spoke to all who knew of it of the Divine presence. To bring such a remembrancer into the midst of the nation and to its metropolis was to put it also at its moral centre, and where it would radiate forth innumerable rays of light and truth and warmth. Here placed, it taught (1) how God must not be regarded as a God far off, but as one nigh at hand; (2) how God wills to be in the constant sight and constant regard of his people, though in veiled majesty; (3) how God would be known, even by symbol and emblem (though not by image), rather than as merely working through second causes and inexplicable influences. The ark ought to be where it can be “inquired at” or “sought to” in whatever may be the ordained ways. Once more, the ark was not only the depository of law and commandment, the stones of Sinai and the strict impartiality of ancient covenant, but its chiefest and most conspicuous *accessory* was all of mercy, and mercy ever accessible. 3. It was a course tending to the higher health of all to bring that ark back. Not mere addition to ecclesiastical pomp and furniture and display, nor to a pervading and penetrating sense of the awful and the infinite in contact with human life, it brought in benigner influences as well. Hope for the sinner; pardon for the penitent; soothing to save from despair; bright and happy thoughts of the supreme Father. That mercy-seat and overshadowing cherubim served to break up into welcome radiancy what would otherwise be the insufferable blaze of the eternal Light himself. It is like an infinite nature parting itself into those *attributes* by which alone partial and finite creatures like ourselves can in any wise lay hold upon it with comfort. Mere soothing, mere comforting, mere subduing influences will not necessarily minister to the higher education of either individual or community, but such influences as these *must* do so. And the known and offered mercy of God, just so *fenced* as it is, must be all pure gain to those who look to it and live in it.

II. THE FAILURE AND THE PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF IT. Though to the eye that looks on the outside only it might then have seemed, and may now seem, that it was not altogether necessary that failure should have been allowed to be the result of the day and of what happened upon it, yet: 1. As matter of fact, *this was the verdict, very decisively pronounced* by the person who bore the principal part in the transaction, and apparently no objection, no remonstrance is made by any others, and they were many, involved in the loss. That the outer reason was not very patent, and the obstacle not very physical, may make the difficulty the worse. *Nervous* complaints may be largely compounded of fancies—these their chiefest ingredients—yet *they* are, as matter of fact, not a whit the less real; they are the stubbornest to hold their own, and most indocile to argument or to persuasion. Much more are conscientious complaints untractable, and justly so. Force will not drive them, persuasion will not conquer or stifle them, their reason is deep-hidden within themselves. And something of this kind must have been at the heart of the matter when David found himself so appalled and so stricken by a certain kind of impression which he received upon the death of one person—an event which must have been, in all ordinary aspects, one of the commonest sights for David. That the failure, therefore, arose from the unseen and the intangible forces that were set active confessedly by the death of one man made by no means a less real, less serious obstacle, but rather the reverse. 2. *The failure was very unexpected.* It certainly was very unexpected as matter of fact. But it was also unexpected in the further degree that, if it had been thought of—if it had entered into the passing stream of thinking of any one, it would have been at once carried out of the current and surrendered itself to the nearest eddying. For (1) nothing in the object at heart would have warranted the gratuitous conjecture of ill omen; (2) nothing in the necessities or likely perils of circumstances would have suggested the conjecture; and (3) nothing (so far as was known) done, or neglected in the preparations, would have bespoken failure in the judgment of a calm, sympathizing, kindly bystander. Little

indeed, then, was there to prepare for such a falling through of the very cherished hopes and the earnest deeds of that day. 3. The failure was of a sort to have *many and wide effects and also cross-effects*. How much thinking of friend and foe would be stirred! How many tongues of friend and foe would allow themselves licence! How would the matter be viewed from one point and another! Its relation to the king and what he had so fervently desired—to the people and their recent union under one king, would be eagerly scanned. The ill omen would be quickly discerned by those who wished ill to David or to Israel. And many a sincere heart would share the pain and anxious doubt and the fear of David himself. There can be no doubt that the greater the previous interest and enthusiasm in the undertaking, and pious zeal towards it, so much severer now the stroke and the shock to all concerned.

II. THE POSSIBLE USES AND EXPLANATION OF THE FAILURE. In default of being able to assign any one positive reason for the disappointment of this day, and for the fact that it fell heavy on those apparently free from blame and inspired with all good feeling and purpose it is ever open to us to *notice results*. We may reverently track *consequences* of Divine judgments and providence, and thence gather something of their origin, even where it would be most irreverent to dogmatize on these causes, to challenge the equity or to criticise the disposition of them. The deepest sorrows, the bitterest griefs, the keenest strokes which fall upon the humble and the wise, are ever found to lead to conduct similar to this in our actual life. When the severest has passed, and we are recovered but a little from the shock, we begin to cast about to inquire with solemn self-searchings what hidden fault there was in ourselves, to what great danger we were drawing near, heedless and unwitting, and at least what residue of good we may derive out of so much evil and suffering. This is right conduct personally, and to follow the lines of such a practical analogy may help us see our way through many a deep thicket of the world's dark history. We never do right when we would "do wrong that good might come." But God ever does right and kindness when he directs trouble upon us, upon our very head, into our very heart, that good may come of it. It is his to chasten, and he chastens for our profit. And thus, when we have seen Uzza, the rash offender, suffer what must have been the just reward of his deeds, and he is passed away, we can but return to ask what lesson the deep and widespread disappointment had for all the rest, high and low. In what significant moral sense of this kind did this disaster find its root? And the answer is of this kind. 1. It may very possibly have been that outward zeal exceeded discretion and sincere piety. 2. It may have been that David and those high ecclesiastical officers with whom lay the ultimate responsibility had not given sufficiently careful instruction to those who only served, and had neglected to copy the well known minuteness and accuracy of their old and revered Law. If so, they had failed of their duty in very high and significant respects. 3. It is certain that, for sanctified uses, this event must have deepened the solemn fear and respect toward the ark and him of whom it told throughout all the people far and wide who had lost some of that essential reverence for it during its long absence. 4. The disaster and disappointment were not a final loss. The delay of "three months" taught fear, raised hope, chastised self-trust, and helped educate to religion a whole people and their priests and king.

Vers. 1, 2, 4.—*The rule that makes a willing people.* These verses discover to us the first, or some of the first, things which David did on finding himself now ruler over an entire and united people. And they serve to illustrate in particular, not merely the good and wise thing which he did, of which we shall speak hereafter, but the good and wise manner in which he set about doing it. Many a promising career has been spoilt by neglecting to observe the method which David now pursued, and diligently pursued, when the career that Providence may have opened has been of the same nature, namely, that of ruler or leader of men. Notice—

I. THE HIGH ESTIMATE SET UPON NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS HARMONY. The ruler now evidently bids for no mere outer form of this, but for the presence of the deep, genuine spirit of it in his people. The captains and all the leaders and all the congregation—if all these will think, and love, and determine, and do the same things, he will be satisfied, and his heart will rejoice. Though possibly he might have been in policy compelled to take less than this and effect or at least accept a compromise, it is

this for which he makes his first bid, and that a sincere and hearty bid. The mere acknowledgment of so great a principle was a happy inauguration of his own kingship and a favourable omen for his reign. He had learnt not a little of the intrinsic value of this harmony in previous affliction of his own, in observation of how things had gone in the notorious absence of it with Saul, and partly in his own experience while he ruled over only a portion of the people. And having now gained the opportunity, he seizes it almost eagerly, he sanctifies it by an immediate practical honouring of it, and does his best not to lose early or needlessly so great and splendid an offer of Providence. Who can estimate the value of the act of a man already known as a good man, and occupying the place of a great man, when he thus sees the opportunity of *advertising* before a whole nation (not the individual quality of individual character, which haply might claim retirement for its perfection, best blossom in the dark and be “born to blush unseen,” but) that intrinsically good and Heaven-born principle which the arbitrary disposition and the despot would have made it their first endeavour to trample underfoot and hide out of the way? The man who stamps a beneficial principle of this kind with royal approbation—with that most royal kind of approbation which belongs to exalted and wide moral influence—is one of the very chietest of the benefactors of his kind, and honours his own nature and its Author at the same time. His deed is one of the best *in kind*, most multifarious in good effect, and most far-reaching in place and time. The fashion of the selfish, the haughty, the arbitrary, is the contrary—to smother with jealous fear for themselves and their supposed influence the growth of opinion and private judgment the co-operation and the sympathy of the many, while they love their obedience best when it is the blindest.

II. THE RATIONAL WAY TAKEN TO OBTAIN THAT HARMONY. This was shown in two degrees. David is not a leveller. He knows well the principle of hierarchy, which nature itself illustrates in every direction, but nowhere more than in the gift and circumstance of man. These distinctions he does not affect to ignore or to despise. So (1) he consults the judgment of the captains and every leader, who themselves formed a very “congregation of Israel” round about him; and (2) tests the willingness, or professes to do so, of the “brethren” and “the priests and Levites” “everywhere . . . in all the land of Israel.” There is no doing even the best and most religious thing altogether over the heads of the great people themselves. The principle of proxy in religion is nobly and opportunely here dishonoured. A religious *people* can alone constitute a religious nation. Willinghood in religion alone adequately attests the reality of its nature. This ruler David yields of his own accord what not a few, even of enlightened, civilized, modern times, would think it a great deal to yield—the pride of commanding, the pride of personal authority, the pride of bearing down any possible little difference or contrariety of opinion that might be expressed—in order to attain the end, and an end in itself supremely desirable. How often that end—the end answering exactly to that description, that it is supremely desirable—gets overlooked and suffers loss or absolute eclipse because of the eager, jealous, unlovely fray of personal, class, or priestly feeling! When we act thus we court defeat for our cause, though it be the highest; and to the great foe against whom we should show front so united we show instead the joints in our harness and armour and the weak places of ourselves. When we act thus it is not the resistlessness of the force of co-operation that we are likely to get, for it is not this that we are honestly seeking. We are seeking *self* first. The confidence that we do not give, or offer to give, we do not get offered in return, nor get it at all. We are poor, weak, uncertain. There is not *constitution* in us, nor the health and soundness of constitutionalism. Great is the gulf between that people of whatsoever sort and the ruler, the first principle of the latter of whom is that he must rule with unquestioned and inelastic command, and they obey with unquestioning and blind obedience. Nations and communities and families have, in numbers that cannot be numbered, suffered wreck irretrievable from this one cause, and yet the forcible and innumerable warnings do not seem as yet to have secured a thorough mastery of the lesson on the part of the world. But at all events one clear, noble, loving exemplification of the very opposite is furnished to us by the prudent and sympathetic conduct of David in the narrative before us. He determines on ascertaining whether it is not possible to have the entire approval of the nation and the hearty co-operation of all. And he takes the right method to evoke these. The effect is that which has rarely

failed to be the effect under any fairly analogous circumstances, that a splendid example of national and religious willingness and harmonious consent is brought to view—a common glory of ruler and people and a universal source of instruction to the world. “All the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.”

Ver. 3.—Religious resolution based on regretful memories. David certainly wishes to make a contrast, and a decided one, between the days and the administration of Saul and those of himself; for it was ripe time, both that such contrast should be made, and made patent to all the nation. Yet, as we have read what he says and does, we do not take the impression that he desires to make that contrast ostentatiously, invidiously, or with any degree of triumphant antipathy toward his predecessor. What he does desire is to make it effective and real. Indeed, though we cannot hold David responsible for the way in which things went in the days of Saul, and for the neglect and dishonour shown to the ark as well as to a few other of the observances of religion, yet his tone falls on our ear with something of the sound of self-reproach. And although it is impossible that he could in deep earnest have held himself responsible for those things—to profess it could have amounted to mere affectation—yet for all this we observe that he now speaks as though he would voluntarily include himself in his measure amongst the number of those involved in the fault and certainly in the disastrous consequences of it. He classes himself and those whom he is exhorting in the one common number of those who, let the causes be what they might, had long lived in neglect of some of the highest exercises and privileges of their religion. May we not justly set this down again to the forgiving temper and delicate feeling and refined nobility of spirit in David, to which his treatment of Saul had already often borne witness while Saul yet lived and though he was his bitterest foe? Therefore is it that David now abstains from making any needless, any profuse references to the chief causes of the irreligion of the past reign. He does not at all enlarge upon the conduct of the arch offender, though in the necessity of things he mentions his name. Two simplest sentences tell the tale of what weighs deeply on his heart: “Let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul.” Let us notice—

I. THE RESOLVE UPON IMMEDIATE AMENDMENT, AND THE IMMEDIATE PROCLAMATION OF IT. We cannot doubt that the mind of David was made up, that his resolution was formed. He is no sooner king of the whole people than he acknowledges the necessity of the presence and the ark of the God of the whole people. “Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength:” this is his heart’s earnest prayer. And he does not merely “in secret” pray, but takes the responsibility of exhortation. He does not smother his convictions, nor utter them with bated breath, nor hope others will take them up and work them out while he slumbers; but he has the courage of his convictions, and as it were in the audience of the whole people, he rouses their sense of duty and calls them to a practical, even though tardy, repentance. Clear duty is always to be honoured by prompt attention to it and by prompt summons of others to it. And it is to be observed with painful consequence that it is clear interest, clear policy, clear present gain, that too often wins this prompt attention, rather than clear duty in those very highest forms of it which the pure acts of religion involve. First then, the own prompt thought of David, and secondly, his unshaking call to others, bespeak a genuine religion in this matter in him. He is balked by no shamefacedness, by no timidity of such as sometimes seem to think that their religion requires apologizing for, and that they may rule it rather than be implicitly ruled by it. But David betrays the real spirit of thorough amendment, and, though the waters of repentance should need to run deep and very deep, they will safely bear a man through them.

II. THE FAITHFUL PRESENCE OF ONE OF THE GREATEST HELPS TO THE AMENDMENT OF PRACTICAL REPENTANCE, namely, a frank admission and public confession of the exact facts of the case. Nothing is a surer deterrent for a repentance that might be than an unwilling facing of the exact state of things. Nothing augurs more surely that the repentance will die off with the transitoriness of a “morning cloud” than that it be unaccompanied by an uncompromising confession, or be accompanied with but a feeble, partial confession. But the assertion now made without fear of contradiction is of the most unequivocal: “We did not inquire at it in the days of Saul.” As though in our

own days a man highly placed and of authority says of himself, and involves a large number of others in the assertion, while he looks them steadfastly in the face, “We were never on our knees;” “We forgot to pray;” “We lived long, perilous, anxious years without prayer.” To tell myself honestly my own greatest sin, and make confession thereof to one’s own soul argues two things—(1) some of the truest courage; (2) the likeliest, surest evidence of genuine conversion. However that sin was to be shared, and whoever might be justly charged with being chiefly answerable for it, the nation Israel could not be brought in guilty of a greater or more suicidal sin than that of neglecting “to inquire at the ark.” Well may we imagine that unmeasured pathos, sincerest self condemnation, underlie this confession, “For we inquired not at it in the days of Saul.”

III. THE ENTIRE ABSENCE OF ANY APPARENT DISPOSITION TO EXPLAIN AWAY THE SIN.
 No excuse is suggested, no palliation is hinted. The bare fact announced seemed as though to make each one who heard, as well as him who had spoken, hold his breath. There is no offer on the part of David to point to what, so far as fact was concerned, he might justly have pointed—the clear, bad example of Saul, and the distracted, divided, worried nation, chief thanks to Saul. Adam, as the most natural thing in the world, early in the world as he was, attempted to push his sin a step further, though to fix it on Eve; and Eve acted after an exactly similar type. But David seems now to teach how convinced, utterly, he is that no such subterfuge can be anything but the subterfuge of an hour. He seems to know well what Ezekiel declared with such unsparing directness, none should elude it, “The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die.” Were there a hundred manifest explanations, a hundred plausible excuses of the fact that Israel for a generation or for one year does “not inquire at the ark,” not all these will for one moment deliver Israel from its own inevitable loss, all the worse because *self*-inflicted, all the more cruel because ushered in by high precedents. And let there be a sin attaching to any one of us, a favourite, a besetting sin; and let us be able to give a hundred explanations and a hundred palliations of it. These hinder our confession, but do not help our soul; they hinder our estimate of our own sin, but lessen not its malignant nature; they hinder our likely breaking free, for ever free, but do not compensate for our not being free.

IV. THE ILLUSTRATION PRESENTED OF THE DUTY OF BREAKING AWAY THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE FROM COMPLICITY WITH OTHER MEN’S SINS. Whatever was David’s share in the sin and the loss of the nation that had not for so long a time “inquired at the ark,” now there comes for him the time when he has to consider the position he holds with regard to the matter, no longer as a private citizen and as an individual man, but as successor to Saul, and first man in the realm. It is found by some one of the hardest things, not simply to break down their own habits, but to break through others’ precedents. Any number of anomalies are condoned and are still permitted to exist because they have existed, and perhaps existed long. But the anomalies of sin against God and sin against man can never be justly condoned on this principle, come they recommended by any number, any length, any kind of precedents. In nothing, perhaps, is the force of precedents more willingly felt, more tamely succumbed to, than in matters of religion and religious significance. And it is here that they should least of all be honoured thus. “To the Law and to the testimony” must they be brought. The ark has been neglected; the Bible has been unstudied, unmeditated; the closet of prayer has been unrequited. It has got fashionable “to forsake the assembling of ourselves together;” and it is considered wit to level gile and sarcasm against God’s great ordinance of preaching. To break through all this and subvert it, and begin afresh before the eye of man requires strong conviction, real religion, great courage. David frees himself with few enough words at the expense of his predecessor from any complicity with his career. He sees the steps that may be retraced, the evil courses that may be reformed, and the mischief that may be repaired, and he gives himself no rest till the great task is begun and concluded. With him in this matter to see is to conquer.

Ver. 12.—*A mortifying stumble sanctified.* On the threshold of his reign David desired to do an act especially right, and on the threshold it seems that he is destined to encounter in that very attempt failure and keenest disappointment. With enthusiastic faith in the ark, it is his heart’s first and deepest desire to bring it again home—at least to some

place more like permanence and honour. And in the bringing of it, through no apparent fault of his own, the enterprise fails, disastrously and fatally. This issue he must feel equivalent to a personal and very severe rebuff. Yet there is scarcely room to doubt that honest motive, religious feeling and principle, and an ardent faith dictated his desire and attempt. And as little room is there apparently to doubt that David reckoned on the helpful protection of Providence against whatever could be called *accident*, and from his heart prayed for it. The facts, however, of that day's journey and work we know; and they stand in painful contrast to what we had hoped. All the *circumstances* we do not know, and there may be explanations not given us which would easily mitigate our surprise and account for what happened. It may be that David did omit to give the most proper directions, and to urge the needful cautions, and to implore solemnly the Divine blessing. He may have been a little too confident of the mere act itself, a little too trustful in the good intentions of himself, and a little too uplifted because of the unanimous sentiment of all whom he had consulted. A stumble over the threshold may be very mortifying, very humbling, but no doubt it has often saved infinitely worse calamity further on. The very badness of an omen may turn confidence into care, and will work well for a cause, if it call special attention to some fact, or principle, or aspect of the whole matter liable to be overlooked or insufficiently regarded. Perhaps in the present instance, did we but know all, this might sufficiently explain all that at first looks hard on David and an ill encouragement for his pious zeal. Passing, therefore, interesting but uncertain conjecture, it is open to us to study some of the known and ascertained results of that same day and that same bitter experience of David. The passage before us proclaims plainly some of these, and proffers a leading illustration of the principle of present loss compensated by spiritual results. Notice—

I. **THE BIRTH OF A DEEP RELIGIOUS FEELING OF FEAR OF GOD IN DAVID.** "He was afraid of God that day." David was not like a very young man; still less was he like a very young man with little knowledge, and who had been stinted of opportunity of gaining experience. Much of this he had already accumulated, and especially of the kind that had brought lessons of God and his providence near to him. There is not a little evidence going to indicate that David had a certain predisposition to religious thought and feeling. There is a wonderful absence of indication of the contrary. His mind had largely opened to Divine manifestation, his thoughts frequently roved among the thoughts and ways of God. Dangers and actual sufferings and fears had often brought him into near converse with the kindness and watchfulness of the "chief Shepherd," of whom he knew how to speak so well. Perhaps it had never struck him (and perhaps it would have never struck us except for this incident) that there remained for him something especial to learn of God in a very different kind of direction from all before. His impressions of God were all most grateful, as well they might be. He had found God a "Sun and a Shield"—Light, Warmth, and Protection. He had found God one who "had lifted him up on high," and "had not suffered him to be cast down," nor "his foes to rejoice over him." He had been in earthly trial and persecution much, but in heavenly favour more, and in a wonderful assurance of all that gave him "boldness of access" to God. And he had not yet learned the other side—not, indeed, of the benevolent character and beneficent working of God—but the other side of *himself*, which might greatly need another sort of manifestation of the Divine power. Though he had often seen God's justice and his anger, and had said, "God is angry with the wicked every day," he had never felt these, nor had dreamed that he was such that the time might come that he would *have* to feel them, and his experience become enlarged by so much as this, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments" (Ps. cxix. 120). To know a fear of God is one of two things for the child of God. It is either to know the fear of one's own sin in honest earnest, or to catch one humbling, overwhelming sight of the contrast between the finite and erring nature of the creature man and the infinite perfection of God. As Adam first "was afraid;" as Jacob "was afraid" when he woke from that transporting dream; as Peter was afraid in the presence of the mighty Master of miracle; so was David now "afraid of God." There were slight differences of detail in each case, and differences of *form*, but the fundamental facts were identical, and they were two in one—a sinful creature seizing a moment's real idea of the all-holy Almighty! And this was the birth of a deep religious feeling in David which he never forgot, and which no doubt served the rest of his life many a valuable end.

II. CORRECTOR AND FULLER KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, WHILE IT INTERPOSES DELAY, DOES NOT INVOLVE DESPAIR, BUT DOES ENSURE A MORE EXALTED ESTIMATE OF WHAT IT IS TO ENTERTAIN HIM. The ark, with the mercy-seat upon it and the overshadowing cherubim, symbolized the Divine presence, and was, when located in the sanctuary in its proper place, unseen except by the high priest. In it centred the reverential feeling of the people. It is exceedingly likely that something of the deep mysterious awe with which it was associated was lowered and impaired by its history, when taken by the Philistines and lost to its own people. David himself may have been among the number of those whose higher sense suffered some depreciation. He revered the ark and prized it; he thought it a necessity to the well-being of the nation, and ardently longed “to bring it to himself to the city of David.” But something of this was form and the worship of form. Something of it was reliance on “means of grace,” rather than vital dependence on the grace itself. Even David’s time was too late to let this in David’s own self be “winked at”—or in the self of any *true* Israelite. The Bible that is possessed must be intelligently used; it is not to be lowered to the place of a talisman. The God who is worshipped must be worshipped “in Spirit and in truth”—he “seeketh *such* to worship him.” And what David had thought could be sufficiently well done in a day or two, he learns will take “three months” preparation. During all this time his estimate of what it was to have and to entertain the Divine representation was being raised. How many a time did he speak in this wise to himself, “How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?” And the very process of thought that was going on within him, the mingled perplexity, disappointment, humiliation, all wakened by an unusual fear, were at the same time raising his estimate of the guest he fain would welcome, and fitting him to entertain that guest. In this instance fear supplied the missing link, fear held the key-stone position, fear wakened the things that “were ready to die,” unsuspectedly as the danger lurked. The theology must needs be radically weak that omits the justice of God, the integrity of man; the judgment of God, the fear of man. But the correcter and fuller knowledge of the Divine nature and relationship to man, which confessedly is most adapted to waken fear, to quicken it, to keep it a steady and strong force in our life, is *not* that which will permanently discourage, disappoint, or occasion desponding. It will interpose delay, it will occasion heart-searching, it will promote a wholesome self-renunciation. But thereupon it is provided that, long ere despair is touched, a ransom will be found, and a triumphant entrance for the ark more prized than ever. “Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”

Ver. 14.—*Responsible service outvied by abounding reward.* A certain amount of obscurity hangs over the name of Obed-edom, as has been already seen. And supposing that slight amount of obscurity removed or to count for little, it remains to take note of the fact that the signification of the name Obed-edom—*servant to Edom*—lends some additional interest to the circumstance of the ark’s entertainment for a space of three months at his house. It reminds one of some two or three occasions in the time of our Saviour and in the first history of the apostles, when those who did not bear the name of Israel did seem to do works better than those of Israel, and to carry a truer heart within them, and received a signal and gracious reward. But on whatever occasion and in whatever way he or the family of which he came became possessed of the name, there is little doubt that this Obed-edom was a Levite, of the Kohathite family. And as his house would appear to have been near the scene of the judgment that befell Uzza, while the ark was now on its way from the house of Abinadab, the Levite of Kirjath-jearim, it rather invited David to place it there awhile under his care. David is now the victim of panic. Whether the panic were more the offspring of good or bad quality, and had in it preponderance of good element or otherwise, certain it is that it lost David for three months the possession of the ark, where he would fain have it. Again he must have lived on mercy, and had to rest his hope again on this—that the will be taken for the deed. It was a shadow of how it would be later on with the building of the glorious temple. But equally certain was another thing—that what David lost of honour, privilege, reward, another obtained: “The ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had.” We have here a kind of leading instance of responsible trust transferred;

lost by one it is gained by another, it is worthily fulfilled, it is bountifully rewarded. Notice—

I. THE ARDUOUS TRUST OF THE FIRST MAN IN THE KINGDOM HAS COME BY CIRCUMSTANCES, WHATEVER THEY MAY BE, TO BE FORFEITED, EITHER TEMPORARILY OR ALTOGETHER, TO ONE OF THE HUMBLEST. Very much of human life and circumstance often seems to go by chance, often seems to be most arbitrary, often seems to those who most implicitly strive to believe in providence very unlike the work of an all-wise and beneficent providence. But sometimes we seem more able to get a clue which helps to strengthen, refresh, renew an implicit faith. The mere glimpse of such an explanation does at the same time rebuke our former doubt and failing faith. Have we not help here also? All David's position, all his holy enthusiasm, all his good intention, do not suffice, it appears, to compensate the absence of some certain, real, moral quality. David had much of the noble, the brave, the forgiving, the generous, about him. But more than once he lets himself down for the want of a calm, unsparing faithfulness with himself. And for want of this, one of the grandest prizes, one of the greatest opportunities, now slips from his fingers. One of the strongest forms of human weakness will be found to consist in want of continuity of moral effort. One of the great victorious forces, despite of all human weakness, will be found in the reverse of this—"patient continuance," undespering tenacity, the importunity which enlists time on its side. This present in one who seems to have no outer advantage of position or grace or other gift will avail more than a score of other gifts of fortune and gifts of character, if this be absent or inconspicuous. Surprising dash is in the long run conquered, for it is exactly for every matter of long run that dash has little persuasion. The lowliest humility of person, place, character, which has power to wait, to endure, to continue, has a career before it which, without one ambitious endeavour or thought, gets borne on irresistibly to the highest goal. But the other style may break down irretrievably in a moment. We should not need always to wonder so much when "the mighty are put down from their seats and they of low degree are exalted," if we would just see that the reverse that thus happens is emphatically not that of chance or reckless caprice, but a result of that which God most regards, the presence of some deep-lying, significant moral quality, or the want of it. The unnoticed working of this truth is not equivalent to any uncertainty in the working of it. And the invisible working of it, even when most invisible to man, is no stealthy indication of the indefensibleness of it when God should once arise to reveal and vindicate all. And he it is who is Arbiter of providence. Meantime mankind is ever being offered openly enough its own lesson.

II. A TRUST OF THE HIGHEST RELIGIOUS CHARACTER AT HOME IN LOWLY LODGING. The history of real greatness, of genuine goodness, and emphatically of God's Church, is a continuous illustration of this very thing. The palace has seldom enough been, either of human endeavour or Divine decree, the nursery of the only real thing fit to be called greatness. Abundant privilege, knowledge, opportunity, have not been the seed-bed of signal and bright displays of goodness. The places where these grow are not here. Nay, these two things may be said—that it is impossible to calculate or to foresee where they will be found; and that it is the least correct account of them to say that they "grow." They at all events "are born." "The Spirit bloweth where it listeth," and we oftentimes are startled to hear the sound of it, and are envious that the pinion is heard so fleet and so strong as it passes our own ear or our own abode in order to light upon the head or the roof of some very humble neighbour. No lodging was too humble for Jesus from birth to death, from stable and manger to that cross upon which he "had not where to lay his head." And the nearest approaches to the God-like visitation in heart and home of man have been in the humble heart, the lowly home, the meek spirit, the Church that "the world knoweth not." Whoever this Obed-edom was, up to this time his name was not inscribed on any roll of fame. And had it not been for his being ready to entertain that ark without the self-depreciation of Moses when he wanted to evade responsibility; without the panic of David when he thought of his own safety rather than of the honour and safe housing of that very ark; without the unmannerly prayer of the stricken Peter, "Depart from me," when he feared his Saviour more than his sin,—his name would never have been where it finds now its chiefest glory, nor his home one of the veritable oases of the world's desert.

Verily the ark of God, the presence of God, the secret of God, the Spirit of God, the Church of God, are all of and with the humble and ungrasping and unexpectant heart. *That* kind of heart God surprises and makes it his home.

III. HIGH RELIGIOUS TRUST FAITHFULLY MET AND FULFILLED BRINGS FULLEST, RICHEST BLESSING. It is well to note the great stress laid upon the shower of blessing that descended upon the house of Obed-edom and himself, “and all that he had.” It were well if it were not too much considered old-fashioned to think, to say, heartily to believe, that God’s blessing does go with hospitality shown to his servants, liberality shown to his Church, honour shown to his Word. The history before us tells us the old-day fact plainly. It is not obsolete as a principle. Let the conditions be seen again, and the results will be seen again. If, indeed, a man give wealth and render honour, hoping to receive for it in another way what he would regard as a very ample equivalent, this should earn for itself but the name of another form of simony, and evoke again the just anathema, “Thy money perish with thee . . . thou hast neither part nor lot in the matter . . . thy heart is not right in the sight of God.” Therefore we cannot say, and would not say, “Let the experiment be but tried, and await with confidence the result.” For so soon as ever it be regarded as experiment, and take the least semblance of any of the shapes of calculation, the Spirit has gone—the greater Spirit has sped his flight far enough distant. But when this thing genuinely appears in heart or home, and honour is first shown to God, service first shown to Christ, and the ear listens first of all sounds for the whisper of the Spirit—then three months’ sojourn of all Divine token is none too much condescension for the majesty of Heaven to deign, and perennial blessing upon the family, the business, and all unto which the hand may be set, none too great bounty for the Giver of all to bestow. That house is full of fragrance; the perfume spreads grateful abroad. More and still more of gift is not graspingly, selfishly, anxiously sought. It comes, and the earth yields her prophetic ful increase. Little enough is said of what reverence, what care, what holy fear, Obed-edom and family showed the ark. These are to be supposed. But enough is said of how well God pays his faithful steward.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Revival of religion.* The resolve to fetch back the ark of God was a sign of reviving interest in religion, of a more lively desire for the Divine favour, and of a deeper sense of the importance of observing religious ordinances. As the symbol of the Divine presence, as the depository of mementos and pledges of Jehovah’s authority and mercy, the *ark* was held sacred by the Hebrew people. Its proper position was in the most holy place of the tabernacle. It was justly felt to be a national calamity when the ark was taken by the Philistines in battle. That it was allowed to remain after its restoration at Kirjath-jearim for seventy years was culpable negligence, which was significant of religious indifference. The newly elected king was acting rightly as the human head of the theocratic kingdom in advising that the almost forgotten ark should be brought up with joyful solemnities to Jerusalem. His resolution, supported by the sympathy and co-operation of the people, was indicative of a revival of religion. The incident suggests several highly important lessons.

I. NATIONAL IRRELIGION ENTAILS NATIONAL CALAMITIES. It is always unjustifiable to attribute specified individual instances of calamity to the intentional interposition of a retributive Providence. At the same time, the world is under a righteous Ruler, and communities as well as individuals are subject to his sway. National vices and crimes have unquestionably a tendency to produce national troubles and disasters. Sin cannot go unpunished; a nation suffers when a nation errs.

II. REPENTANCE IS A NATIONAL DUTY. If a people in its corporate capacity can err, why can it not in the same capacity repent? David reminded the chiefs that, as a people, Israel had not inquired at the ark in the days of Saul. Thus he quickened the conscience of the community. Insensibility to sin is of all sins the worst. To recognize and confess, to mourn and to forsake sin, is the indispensable condition of acceptance and of reformation. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful,” etc.

III. IN A GREAT MORAL CRISIS IT BECOMES THE REPRESENTATIVES OF A NATION TO

CONSULT WITH A VIEW TO UNITED REVIVAL. David consulted every leader and referred the matter to all the congregation. In a theocracy, no doubt, action was possible which would be impracticable in a nation where great diversity of opinion and practice prevails. But how obviously appropriate is it that religious societies and their leaders—the devout, the wise, the experienced—should take counsel with a view to religious revival and reform!

IV. GENERAL COUNSELS OF REFORMATION SHOULD ISSUE IN PRACTICAL ACTION. The people were not brought together merely to "talk over" the existing state of things. They were summoned under the king's leadership to *act*, and they did act. (What are called "resolutions" at religious meetings are often misnamed; it is sometimes the case that those who pass them never dream of exerting themselves to carry them into effect.) If religion is to be revived and the land to be purged of iniquity, if the favour of God is to be recovered and the honour of God to be sought, it must be by united effort and action. Each godly person must ask, "What can I do towards such an end?" True acknowledgment of God is not merely verbal, it is practical. When all the people, repenting of sin, turn unto the Lord, he too will turn them again unto himself, and they shall be saved.—T.

Ver. 4.—*Politics and morals.* David no sooner set before the people their duty with regard to the ark than they immediately resolved to act in accordance with his counsel. The chronicler explains why they did so; he tells us, in language remarkably dignified and simple: "For the thing was right in the eyes of all the people."

I. A NATION SOMETIMES NEGLECTS TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT THROUGH INATTENTION. The ark seems to have been overlooked during the years it remained at Kirjath-jeirim: "We inquired not at it in the days of Saul." It is singular that nations sometimes connive at great national sins, that national conscience seems to slumber. How otherwise can we account for the prevalence of war, of slavery, of cruelty to prisoners, and other evils, which have disgraced civil and Christian communities?

II. IT IS A HAPPY THING WHEN THE QUESTION IS PUT TO A NATION—WHAT IS RIGHT? It is too common to ask the people—What is customary and in accordance with precedents? What is expedient? What will contribute to national fame? But nations as well as individuals are under the government of a righteous moral Ruler and King. And there is one question which those who would elevate and guide a nation should ever raise—What is *right*?

III. THE NATIONAL CONSCIENCE SOMETIMES CORDIALLY RESPONDS TO THE REVELATION OF RIGHT. Let not the multitude be flattered; they are prone to bow before the furious gust of passion; yet, when the impulse of prejudice or anger is past, they are capable of proving themselves amenable to higher motives. Great acts of justice and self-sacrifice have, in such cases, been performed by a morally awakened society. If "the thing be right in the eyes of all the people," then there may be witnessed magnificent displays of heroism and unselfishness. Then is the adage true, *Vox populi vox Dei*.

IV. NATIONAL CONSCIENCE ONLY FULFILS ITS PART WHEN IT LEADS TO NATIONAL ACTION. "All the congregation said that they would do so." Feeling must lead to corresponding achievement, or it is mere worthless sentimentality. A people's protest is good, but a people's action is better still.

LESSONS. 1. Let those who would forward a great movement appeal to the people at large, and seek to enlist the national judgment and conscience on their side. 2. Let nations that would enjoy the Divine favour seek it by doing the Divine will, by pursuing "the thing that right is."—T.

Ver. 8.—*Holy mirth.* To some minds the two ideas, holiness and mirth, do not seem to harmonize. Whether because goodness is sometimes associated with austerity, and religious observances with dulness, or because mirth is sometimes associated with sensual indulgence and profanity; the fact is that to many minds there appears a mutual repugnance between the two.

I. WE HAVE HERE A SUITABLE AND INSPIRITING OCCASION OF HOLY MIRTH. General rejoicing should not take place only when temporal deliverances or material prosperity have been experienced. When God shows his mercy towards a people, in conferring

upon them spiritual privileges, then should they show forth his praise, and make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

II. THE UNION OF ALL CLASSES IN HOLY MIRTH. King, priests, and people rejoiced together, and if all orders and ranks are alike indebted to God's goodness, all should alike join in his service and praise. Widespread is the beneficence of the heavenly Father; let all the children give thanks, and be joyful before the Lord the King.

III. HOLY MIRTH FINDS AN APPROPRIATE EXPRESSION IN CONJOINED AND CORDIAL SERVICES OF MUSIC AND SONG. Such utterance of mirth is natural, is in accordance with the constitution God our Maker has given us. It is scriptural, for both under the old covenant and the new, vocal praise was practised by the saints of God. It is acceptable: "With such sacrifices God is well pleased." It is an anticipation of heaven, where the praises of the redeeming God are universal and perpetual.

LESSONS. 1. Discourage a severe, morose piety. 2. Let songs of rejoicing abound in Christian homes and Churches. 3. Let the young be trained to associate happiness with religion—to take pleasure in "the service of song in the house of the Lord."—T.

Ver. 10.—*Severity of judgment.* To understand this narrative it is necessary to bear in mind the character of the older dispensation. It was an economy in which persons, things, and places were set apart as holy, doubtless in order to instil into the minds of the people ideas of spiritual purity and consecration. The ark was a holy thing, in a sense in which nothing material is holy under the Christian dispensation. But there are principles which underlie these ceremonial appointments and provisions, which are deserving of our serious and discriminating attention.

I. THE HISTORICAL INCIDENT. The chronicler here relates: 1. A serious offence. When Uzza put forth his hand and touched the ark, though he did so only for the security of the sacred chest, he incurred the Divine displeasure. His act was one of *officiousness*; it was not his business to interfere with the apparatus of Divine worship. He was guilty of *irreverence*; for he showed that he did not stand in awe of the symbol of the Divine presence. And we may discern even *profanity* in his conduct; it was only for the chosen tribe to minister in connection with the sanctuary and what it contained, and although the ark was in transit to its resting-place, its safe conduct should have been left to the Levites. 2. A severe punishment. "The Lord smote him . . . there he died before God." The penalty seems at first view disproportionate. Yet it was both what might have been anticipated and what was necessary to produce a wholesome impression. That it did produce awe and trembling there can be no question. The severe judgment tempered the national rejoicing and even altered the purpose of the king as to the residence of the ark of the Lord.

II. THE MORAL LESSON. As we read this narrative we are impressed with the general lesson of: 1. *God's displeasure with disobedience.* The Scriptures are full of lessons illustrating this principle; they begin on its first page and continue to its last. There is a more special lesson, viz.: 2. *That unspiritual men should not meddle with spiritual things.* In Christian Churches it is of the highest importance that men actuated by carnal and worldly motives should not be allowed to intrude and to influence their affairs. Let those be clean who bear the vessels of the Lord. The profane cannot with impunity discharge sacred functions.

LESSONS. 1. Let God and all that is his be regarded with reverence. 2. Let sinners spared by Divine mercy adore the forbearance and loving-kindness of the Lord, and "seek him whilst he may be found, and call upon him whilst he is near."—T.

Ver. 14.—*Household blessing.* "Prosperity," says Lord Bacon, "is the blessing of the old covenant, adversity of the new." Certainly Old Testament Scripture abounds in instances of temporal abundance, fertility, and happiness, represented as proofs of the favour of the Most High. In the text Obed-edom is recorded to have received the ark into his house, and with it to have received an abundant blessing upon himself and upon all that pertained to him.

I. THE GROUND OF BLESSING. Apparently this was, in the case before us, a regard for what was God's. But this was doubtless an expression of regard for God himself. The Divine Searcher of hearts and Judge of all sanctions this principle; and although we can give nothing, save our hearts, to God, we can give to his people much that is

acceptable to him. Our Lord Jesus often puts this motive before his disciples. What we do we are to do for his sake; and what we do to his people we are deemed to do for him. Still, as in the olden days, God honours those that honour him.

II. THE SIGNS AND TOKENS OF BLESSING. Whom God blesses he blesses in themselves—in their own persons. He enriches them with spiritual knowledge; he reveals to them his favour; he fits them for his service. He bestows upon them relative blessings. As God blessed the house of Obed-edom, so there is no more delightful way in which he reveals his favour to his people than by visiting in mercy those most dear to them—encompassing them with the protection of his providence, and bringing them to a knowledge of his grace and love. He blesses them in their possessions; sometimes, according to the Hebrew saying, “in their basket and their store,” but always by granting them grace to make a sanctified use of all they have. Let all unite in the prayer, “God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us!”—T.

Vers. 1-6.—*Piety and policy.* As King of Israel, David made an excellent beginning; he commenced his reign by an act in which piety and policy were happily united. His action was: 1. *Indicative of the piety* which was characteristic of him. We who know David so well from his psalms, as well as from the Biblical history of his life, are not surprised that, when anointed king over all Israel, his first thoughts were directed to the service of God. With many monarchs this would have been the last consideration. But it was deepest and uppermost with David. He felt, and most truly, that he owed his elevation to the distinguishing goodness of Jehovah, and when he had reached the height of his ambition he was not going to forget the hand that had lifted him up. Piety was a vein that ran straight through the *life*, because right through the *character* of the king. 2. *Politic in all particulars.* He acted: (1) With sound constitutionalism. Instead of deciding and decreeing absolutely, he “consulted,” etc., he “said unto all the congregation of Israel,” etc. (vers. 1, 2). This was “the manner of the kingdom” (see Judg. xx. 7; 1 Kings xii. 6; 2 Chron. xx. 21). It was an act likely to impress the nation very favourably. (2) With consideration toward the sacred tribe. “Let us send . . . to the priests and Levites,” etc. They would naturally expect that special reference would be made to them, and they would be gratified by the royal attention. (3) With regard to the general wishes of the people. All that could come to such a ceremony would like to be present; all were to be invited: “Our brethren everywhere” were to gather together (ver. 2); “David gathered all Israel together” (ver. 5). (4) With tenderness toward the fallen house. He did not reproach Saul with the neglect with which he might have been justly charged; he gracefully included himself in whatever condemnation was implied: “For we inquired not at it in the days of Saul” (ver. 3). (5) Reserving one point which must be final and supreme. Their wishes were consulted and should be carried out, but subject to one condition—the approval of God himself: “And that it be of the Lord our God.” (6) With personal participation and co-operation. He did not *send* up and fetch the ark; he “*went* up, and all Israel” with him (ver. 6).

I. POLICY WITHOUT PIETY IS A POOR AND VAIN THING. It seems clever or even brilliant to those who imitate and practise it; but it is contemned of God, disregarded by the wise and good, and certain to come to an ignominious end. It works in the ground, and then sports in the sun for its little hour, and then it falls utterly to pieces and cannot be lifted up again.

II. PIETY WITHOUT POLICY IS A DEFECTIVE THING. A reverent spirit and a pious purpose are admirable things, but if they are dissociated from discretion, and proceed on their way without regard to the claims, wants, and wishes of men, they will commonly, if not always, fail to secure the object they have in view.

III. PIETY AND POLICY TOGETHER ARE A BENIGNANT POWER. Let good men be prudent as well as reverent, discreet and considerate as well as godly and zealous; let the cause of God be championed and conducted by those who have a knowledge of “what is in man” and what are the conditions under which they work in harmony, and then will the goal be reached and the prize be won.—C.

Vers. 7-13.—*The imperfections of human service.* We cannot read this story of

the first attempt to bring the ark to the capital without being impressed, if not depressed, with a sense of the weakness and imperfection characterizing our human service. We learn—

I. THAT A SLIGHT DEPARTURE FROM THE DIVINE WILL MAY LEAD TO SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES. David, in a moment of thoughtlessness or presumption, decreed that the ark of God should be "made to ride" (ver. 7, marginal reading) "in a new cart." This was not the way prescribed in "the Book of the Law of the Lord" (see Numb. iv. 15). This irregularity led to the act of Uzza (ver. 9), and this to the stroke of Divine wrath which so sadly and seriously interrupted the day's proceedings (vers. 10—13). We are not now called upon to conform our ritual to any prescribed order. The commandment of Christ does not go into the details of outward observance. But it is nevertheless true that any actual departure from his will, though it may seem to be but slight, may lead on and down to a most serious breach. This may apply to his revealed will in regard to (1) the temper and spirit we should cherish, (2) the attitude we should assume, (3) the relations we should enter upon, in our various spheres.

II. THAT IT IS A MATTER OF GREAT MOMENT TO KNOW OUR PLACE IN THE SPHERE OF THE SACRED, AND TO KEEP IT. Uzza was not entitled to lay his hand on the ark of God; he exceeded his right; he intruded into a position for which he was not qualified, and he paid for his presumption the last penalty of sudden death at the hand of God. Those who now attempt a work for which God did not design them and to which Christ does not summon them, whether that of the Christian ministry, of missions, or any other sacred calling, will find that they have committed themselves to duties and responsibilities, the faulty and (perhaps) mechanical, the uncongenial and therefore unspiritual discharge of which will redound to their own serious if not mortal injury. We must take care to keep within the sphere for which our Lord designed us, in the realm of the sacred as well as the secular.

III. THAT OUR BRIGHT AND HOLY JOYS MAY BE MOST UNEXPECTEDLY DASHED. The eighth verse gives us a picture of a company of men in the full enjoyment of sacred pleasure; they were exulting before God in the act of service they were rendering. Sacred joy had reached its very summit, and in the very midst of it, without a moment's interval of preparation, there occurred the transgression and the punishment. Song was turned into lamentation, dancing into weeping, gladness into perplexity and sorrow, day into night. So may it be with us at any hour in this lower earthly sphere. We cannot reckon on the continuance of any present good. Even our joy in God, our delight in his service, may suffer sudden and sad eclipse, and our noon of devout exultation descend at once into the midnight of discomfiture and grief.

IV. THAT GOOD MEN MAY BE MUCH PERPLEXED AT DIVINE DISPOSALS. We read that David was "displeased" (ver. 11), and also that he was "afraid" (ver. 12). We also often find ourselves both perplexed and alarmed at the dealings of God with us. God's way is often "in the sea, his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known." He is sometimes "terrible in his doings toward the children of men." Why he lets the assassin do his deadly work so well, the storm wreck the vessel which is carrying missionaries to their post, the father of the family catch the fatal fever, the irreplaceable minister perish in the railway accident, etc., we do not know and cannot think. Our hearts are saddened, perplexed, troubled, awed. Let us feel that we are but very little children trying to understand a Divine Father, whose wisdom and love *must* be unfathomably deep, *must* go down far lower than our poor plummet will sound. "Blessed are they who do not see, and yet believe." We "walk by faith, not by sight."—C.

Vers. 13, 14.—*Superstitious error and religious truth.* We must take care to read these verses intelligently, or we may misread them altogether. It is possible to draw from them a conclusion which is not in accordance with the mind of God. There is—

I. A SUPERSTITIOUS ERROR AGAINST WHICH TO GUARD. It would be a great mistake to suppose that the mere fact of the presence of the ark in the house ensured prosperity; or that, similarly, the mere presence of sacred rites or persons will now command the favouring regard of God. That there was something more than this in the case of Obed-edom is proved by the facts: 1. That the presence of the ark in the midst of the Philistines proved to be disastrous (1 Sam. v.). 2. That the presence of the ark in

the camp of the Israelites proved to be fruitless of help (1 Sam. iv.). 3. That the ark was nothing more in itself than a box of wood, and, apart from God's determination to bless, could not possibly effect anything at all. 4. That to trust in a thing manufactured of man and not in the living God himself would partake of the idolatrous (see 2 Kings xviii. 4). If we cherish the idea that, because we are connected by blood (or in any other way) with sacred persons, or that because we have much to do officially with sacred things, with the utterance of sacred words, or the performance of sacred rites, or the care of sacred buildings, therefore it will be well with us in the books of heaven, we are only harbouring a fiction, we are leaning on a brittle reed, we are building the house of our hope upon the sand.

II. THE RELIGIOUS TRUTH TO BE RECEIVED AND WELCOMED. God blessed the house of Obed-edom because he cheerfully and reverently made room for the sacred chest. His act was one of simple piety, rendered in an hour of need and offered devoutly, intelligently unto God; therefore God "blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had." It was the mark of God's approval of a service rightly and worthily rendered. The truth for us to gather is that *God's abiding favour is the one sure source of blessedness*. If God be "with us," i.e. for us, on our side, who or what can be against us? "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Those who, in constructing their life, leave God's favour out of the account, make a fundamental and fatal error. Those who go on the principle that his Divine favour will secure true prosperity are proceeding along the lines of truth. Let every man be discontented and disturbed in soul until he has first made sure of the abiding approval of the Most High. Till then it will be wrong with him and with all that he has; when that is gained, all is well with him and his. But how is this approval to be secured? 1. By doing the one thing which God demands of all his children now. *This*, first of all and most of all, is the work or the will of God, that we "believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ," etc. (see John vi. 29; 1 John iii. 23). The acceptance of Christ as our personal Saviour and Lord is the way to secure the abiding favour of the Father of all. Having thus gained his Divine regard, we must continue therein. 2. By striving to be and to do all those things in all our relations which are pleasing in his sight (see Phil. iv. 8; Col. iii. 17, 23). Among many other ways of pleasing Christ, we may win his approving smile in the particular way suggested in the text. 3. By showing special attention to that with which, and to those with whom, he is specially connected—his house and his disciples.—C.

Vers. 1-8.—*David and the ark.* Now that David had been anointed king over Israel, his first act was to think of the ark. During the reign of Saul it had been utterly neglected, and the people had become careless about the ordinances of Divine worship. This was the thought ever uppermost in David's heart. The ark, the outward symbol of the Divine presence, was everything to him. He could not live outside the sunshine of God's favour. To him God was everything, and without him there was nothing. What to him was all the popularity, the loyalty of those who rallied round him to proclaim him king, the devotion of the many thousands of Israel, if the Lord was not with him, the Centre and Source of all? Nothing. We see what David's estimate of God's presence was by the praises which he and all Israel offered on the occasion of bringing up the ark (ver. 8). What had been of old a terror to the Philistines (see 1 Sam. vi.) was the highest joy to the people of God. It is so always. God's presence is to God's people their highest joy. To those who are out of Christ what can it be but terror? Notice, again, how David adds to "if it seem good unto you" the words "and it be of the Lord our God." A true Christian will never, in any question, leave out the *latter* words. They must ever qualify all that precedes.—W.

Vers. 7, 9-12.—*Uzza and the ark.* Since the ark was last heard of it had been in Baalah, or Kirjath-jearim. For upwards of fifty years, since it had been in the hands of the Philistines, it had been in the house of Abinadab of Gibeah, under the charge of his two sons, Uzza and Ahio, who were Levites, and who had been consecrated for the office. For the purpose of removing the ark to Jerusalem it was set upon a new cart, Ahio the son of Abinadab going before (2 Sam. vi. 4) and Uzza following. On the way the oxen stumbled, and Uzza, fearing the ark would fall off, laid hold of it. For this

he was instantly smitten of God, and “there he died by the ark” (2 Sam. vii. 7), “before God” (ver. 10). David was grieved at this, and, instead of proceeding further and carrying the ark as he had intended to Jerusalem, he left it in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, where it remained three months (ver. 14). The setting of the ark on a cart was a hasty and inconsiderate procedure, in direct violation of the command of God (see Numb. iv. 14, 15; vii. 9; xviii. 3). Setting it upon a cart instead of having it carried upon the shoulders may seem to be a very small mistake. Touching it against an express command may seem to admit of extenuation, especially as it seemed to be falling. To the eye of man the fault, under such circumstances, may seem only to require a mitigated punishment. But it is not so with God. The entire act betrayed a forgetfulness of the majesty and holiness of Jehovah’s presence. It was also a departure from the Word. Such departures from the Word, to us who are accustomed to estimate evil by quantity and degree rather than by principle, may seem light things; but God looks at the motive, the principle, the underlying spirit.—W.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The ark in the house of Obed-edom.* The ark was in the house of Obed-edom three months, and “the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had.” Why was this? Obed-edom was a Levite. He had been prepared of God to minister before it. None but a prepared heart can enjoy Christ. The ark was at home with Obed-edom, and he with it. So it is always with Christ and his people. But God not only blessed Obed-edom and his family; the significant words are added, “and *all that he had*.” Everything went right with Obed-edom, in his house, his family, his duties, his joys, and his sorrows, because the ark was there. What a lesson! Reader, why do things not go right with you? Because Christ has not his right place in your heart, in your affections, in your home, in your duties, and in all you have. Let Christ be in all, and then it cannot but be with you as it was with Obed-edom, “the Lord blessed his house, and all that he had.”—W.

Vers. 1—3, 4.—*Unity in religious enterprises.* The ark was the national religious symbol. Its return was a matter of interest to the whole nation. So David made a very earnest effort to unite the whole nation in the work of its restoration. It was but a little thing that David, as the king, should order the ark to be fetched. It was a great mark of respect and honour shown to Jehovah that the whole nation should rise, as one man, and show its care of the Divine symbol. *Religion has its private spheres.* It is strictly an individual and personal thing. Men cannot be saved in masses; the regenerating grace of God only reaches them *one by one*. But while we see this with the utmost distinctness, we must also admit that *religion has its public spheres*, and that these are properly a care and anxiety to all sincere and earnest men. We are not to “forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.” Our Lord gave us his own example of reverent sharing in public worship. With much suggestiveness the evangelist says, “Jesus, as his custom was, went into the synagogue” (Luke iv. 16). The apostles afford the example of sharing together in worship and work. And the best men in every age have fully recognized both the duty and the moral value of public religion. It has been left to our times of luxurious self-indulgence to find excuses for half-day attendance at the sanctuaries, which too often grows into entire neglect of all public means of grace. Bishop Wordsworth notices, in ver. 3, that “David, in his charitable spirit towards the memory of the departed king, does not say that Saul, being possessed by an evil spirit, became indifferent and careless to religion, and was given over to a reprobate mind; but he speaks in general terms, and takes a share of the blame to himself: ‘We troubled ourselves little about the ark in the days of Saul.’ Here is a happy example of mildness and charity, joined with piety and zeal.”

I. THE MORAL VALUE OF UNITY IN RELIGIOUS ENTERPRISE AND WORSHIP. The complete circle of human culture cannot be reached and covered by a purely private religious life. This is fully illustrated in the case of hermits, nuns, and monks, who have isolated themselves from their fellows for purposes of personal soul-culture. But the results have never been the harmonious development of the *whole* nature. Some sides have been unduly cultured, others have been neglected. In our commoner life

private culture can no better suffice. The side of *feeling* becomes unhealthily exaggerated. Certain necessary things in the religious life are only nourished by united and public acts of devotion and worship. We only notice a few of the chief influences for good exerted by such scenes. 1. They check the *self-centering, introspective* habit, the undue attention to *feeling*. 2. They take us out of ourselves by presenting to thought matters of *common* rather than *individual* interest. 3. They sway us to *higher ranges* of *feeling* than we could otherwise reach. 4. They culture *reverence*, and so counteract the tendency of private devotion to nourish undue familiarity with God. 5. And they provide peculiar help for those who, being weak in piety, are very dependent on sympathy.

II. THE POWER THAT MAY BE GIVEN TO ONE MAN TO SECURE SUCH UNITY IN ENTERPRISE AND WORSHIP. Illustrated in David. So, now, a man may give the *initiative*, as has been again and again illustrated in modern missions. Especially note Hudson Taylor's starting of itinerant work in China. A man may give a *leading example*. A man may use *effort* to secure efficiency and attractiveness in worship. Illustrate from *reformers of modern services*—those who have improved Church singing, etc. Impress how superior a *force* the Church has and *wields* to that exerted, in Christian work, by any number of private individuals.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The joy of religion.* The natural and fitting expression of the kingly and national gladness in the restoration of the sacred ark was, “Playing before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.” The three kinds of musical instruments are here indicated—those producing sound by *wind*, by the vibration of *strings*, and by the clanging together of *metals*. For a picturesque realization of the scene brought before us in this verse, see Stanley's ‘Jewish Church,’ vol. ii. 74—76. The mission of music and song is to find expression for man's gladness and joy. It is as natural to sing as to laugh. Man has wonderfully developed the faculties of music and song, and now it is one of our chief modes of expressing human emotions, and of relieving them by expression. It is as truly one of the great forces for exciting and stirring emotion, as is well shown when it is necessary to raise the *martial* spirit of a nation. Dr. Horace Bushnell has a very striking paper on ‘Religious Music,’ in his volume ‘Work and Play,’ in which he opens out and illustrates these two points: “The very wonderful fact that God has hidden powers of music in things without life; and that when they are used, in right distinctions or properties of sound, they discourse what we know—what meets, interprets, and works our feeling, as living and spiritual creatures.” “How carefully this (musical) part of the worship was ordered in the temple service of Israel is known to every reader of the ancient Scriptures; how exactly also the chorus of singers and of players on instruments were arranged, one to answer to another in the deep wail of grief or penitence, the soft response of love, the lively sweep of festive gladness, or all to flow together in choral multitudes of praise, that might even shake the rock of Zion itself.” “And if any one wishes to know what power there may be in music, as an instrument of religion, let him ask what effect the songs of this one singer (David) have had, melted into men's hearts, age after age, by music, and made in that manner to be their consecrated and customary expressions of worship.”

I. THE REASONABleness OF JOY IN RELIGION. We feel the reasonableness of the songs and joy of Israel when redeemed from Egyptian bondage and delivered from their raging foes. Much more is joy and song right and natural as *our* response for redemption from penalty, and deliverance from evil. It can only be a distorted religion that fits with melancholy. “The joy of the Lord is our strength;” and with “joy we draw water from the wells of salvation.” Illustrate from the Old Testament point of view: David and the prophets give high examples. Illustrate from the New Testament point of view: apostles tell us if we “are merry, we should sing psalms;” “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” Modern religious life makes music and song essential features, and these do much towards preserving a healthy tone in our piety. This may be applied to *private* devotion; it is greatly aided by hymn and song. It is the most attractive feature of public worship.

II. THE HELPFULNESS OF SONG IN EXPRESSING RELIGIOUS JOY. What could David have done else, or so well, in uttering his over-charged feelings? Music at once soothes

and gives adequate expression. A man can put his very heart into a song, and ease and quiet his intense emotions by so doing. Estimate the influence of song: it (1) *uplifts*; (2) *brightens*; (3) *aids feeling*; (4) *comforts*. Illustrate by the incidents and influences connected with Paul Gerhardt's hymns. Then we should fully recognize the importance of the gifts of song and music which have been granted to the Church, and see that these are duly *consecrated* and *cultivated*. Religious joy cannot be always maintained, and yet true hearts may even find "songs in the *night*" and in the *prison*. —R. T.

Vers. 9, 10.—Warnings against irreverence. The incident here recalled to mind is one full of difficulties. Uzza seems to have been struck dead for what was, in intention, an act of consideration and care for the safety of the ark. To human view his sin does not readily appear, and some explanations are necessary in making it clear. Uzza's death was not, mainly, a judgment on Uzza, but a lesson, taught in a very solemn manner, to David and the people. They had not been associated with the ark for a long time, and so may have lost some of the due solemnity of feeling concerning it. By the Mosaic rules, the ark was on no account to be touched by human hands. It would not have needed any steadyng if, in obedience to the Law, it had been carried by poles on the priests' shoulders. So God permitted this one man's death to teach the solemn lesson of *reverence*. The sin was really David's in neglecting the due order and regulations, but it pleased God that he should receive his warning through the suffering of another. One tradition says that Uzza was struck by a lightning flash; another represents his death as occasioned by the withering of his hand and arm. "We cannot fully explain this judgment from the side of Uzza. We must add that man, in life and in death, may be used by God to teach his lessons and accomplish his work; and Uzza, in his sudden death, was God's appeal to a king (and to a nation) who had forgotten his holy Law, and were 'following the devices and desires of their own hearts.' That which was a judgment to Uzza was a merciful call to repentance and right-heartedness given to king and people."

I. ATTENTION TO FORMS MAY EXPRESS REVERENCE. Illustrate by the way in which kneeling aids in securing the spirit of prayer. Herein lies the importance of care in arranging the externals, the ceremonials, of Christian worship. The associations of God's house should both secure and cultivate a due and becoming reverence.

II. THE NEGLECT OF FORMS MAY TEND TO NOURISH IRREVERENCE. Some pride themselves on freedom from *forms*. But while it is quite conceivable that overdone *forms* may crush out spiritual life and feeling, it is even more likely that a despising of religious forms may lead to undue familiarity with God's Name, and sanctuary, and worship, and sacraments. If to some it may seem that undue attention to ritual is replacing a true reverence by a mere formalism, to others it appears that the age is singularly and perilously irreverent, and sorely needs again the warning of Uzza's death.

III. THAT WHICH IS DONE FOR GOD MUST BE DONE IN GOD'S WAY. A lesson which every age and every individual needs to learn. David made the very common mistake of trying to do God's work *in his own way*. He must be impressively shown that the fully obedient spirit waits on God to know the *how* as well as the *what*. It not only says, "What wouldst thou have me to do?" but also, "How wouldst thou have me do it?" To win willingness to take God's way is often, as with David, the issue of humiliating failures; and it is precisely the lesson which life-failures are designed to teach.

IV. BY SOLEMN PROVIDENCES SOLEMN LESSONS MAY BE IMPRESSED. Our Lord taught us that we must not venture to convict public sufferers of special sins bringing on them judgment (Luke xiii. 1—5). God often teaches the mass of men by his dealings with a few. The victims of so-called accident vicariously suffer for the good of others. Illustrate by those who die of diseases caused by neglect of sanitary laws. They awaken attention to existing evils, and are the means of saving men. Uzza really saved the judgment that must have fallen on David and the nation if they had kept on acting in this self-willed way.

Make final appeal to modern feeling respecting worship. There are signs of the danger of losing the *worshipping* idea, and overdoing the *instruction* idea, in our public services. We need recalling to a due reverence.—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*Obed-edom's blessing.* The subject introduced here is “God in the home, God cherished in the home, and God blessing the home.” God was pleased to teach Israel by *symbols*, by *incidents*, by *personal experiences*, and by *actions*, as well as by *words*. Here is given a picture of Obed-edom’s home, and we see that God’s cherished presence is assured blessing for the heart and the home.

I. GOD’S PRESENCE WITH US CAN BE GRANTED AND REALIZED. Man can be, and know that he is, the temple of the living God. The possibility of this is the assurance given us in the incarnation of Christ. God can dwell with men; for he has dwelt in the “Man Christ Jesus.”

II. GOD’S PRESENCE WITH US CAN BE CHERISHED. So David, fearing the Divine removal, prays, “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.” We cherish the Divine indwelling by (1) *daily openness*; (2) *dependence*; and (3) *prayer*; but especially by daily following, in simplicity and loyalty, the consequent inward Divine leadings. Compare George Macdonald’s sentence, “If any man will do the truth he knows, he shall know all the truth he needs to know.” God only stays with the obedient.

III. GOD’S PRESENCE TAKES GRACIOUSLY HELPFUL FORM IN CHRISTIANITY. It is the presence of Jesus Christ, and from the records of his earthly life we know what an infinite charm and help that presence can be. Our Lord promised, “I will come to him, and sup with him,” and he left this last assurance, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

IV. GOD’S PRESENCE STILL ENSURES PERSONAL AND FAMILY BENEDICTIONS. It does not ensure freedom from *care*, but it does our sanctification through the care. We cannot be *alone* in any trouble. It brings a gracious *actual reward* of (1) soul-prosperity; (2) family peace and success.

Plead for the recognition of God in the home, by maintaining the habit of *family prayer*. And show the mystery of grace in God’s even using the incentive of promised rewards of godliness, and giving Scripture examples of such rewards.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIV.

The contents of this chapter belong to a period of time subsequent to the taking of the fort of Zion, and find their parallel in 2 Sam. v. 11—25. But if found here in the same order of place as there, they would have followed upon ch. ix. 9; Keil attributes this difference to the desire of our compiler to represent the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem as David’s first undertaking on becoming king of the united people. Considering the contents of this chapter, and remembering that it stands between the unsuccessful attempt to bring home the ark and the final successful bringing of it, it would seem a far more natural thing to suppose that this suggested its present order; for compare ch. xv. 1, 2. The parallel is very close. As far as to the word “Elishua” (ver. 5), there is no difference in the least degree material, except that the word “concubines” is found in Samuel, and preceding the word “wives” of our ver. 3 (yet see ch. iii. 9). The two names *Elpalèt* and *Vogah* are also not found in the parallel,

but our compiler is consistent with himself; for see ch. iii. 6, 7. Further, our ver. 12 states that the idols of the Philistines were by David’s command “burned with fire,” while the Hebrew text of Samuel only states that “David and his men removed them” (דָּבַר), where the Authorized Version incorrectly translates “burned them.”

Ver. 1.—The Kethiv abandons here the invariable analogy of Chronicles, and reads *Hiram* for “Huram,” which latter form, however, is replaced in the Keri. Beside this Hiram or Huram, the king, there was another Hiram or Huram, the same king’s chief artificer, and whom he sent to the help of Solomon (1 Kings vii. 13, 40; 2 Chron. ii. 13; iv. 11, 16). The willing aid which this king lent to David on this occasion, in supplying cedar timber and workmen, was “the commencement of that amity between the Tyrians and the Hebrews, so mutually advantageous to the two nations, the one agricultural and the other commercial” (Milman’s “History of the Jews,” i. 239). The meaning of the name Hiram is probably “noble,” or “high-born.” This disposition, at all events, he seems to have illustrated in his generous friendship to David, Solomon, and their people. Very

little to be relied upon is known of him outside Scripture, but his reign is said to have extended from B.C. 1023—990.

Ver. 2.—Was lifted up. The passage in Samuel reads נִזְבֵּן, the Piel conjugation. The present form is obscure, נִזְבֵּן. It may be considered either an irregular Niphal third pers. fem.; or Niphal infin. absolute (2 Sam. xix. 43); or possibly even an irregular Piel form, in which case the pronoun "he" will need to be supplied as the subject. Supposing that any special connection subsists between this and the previous verse, it is not necessary to consider it remote. Then, as now, the building of a house for one's self, much more the building of a noble palace on the part of a king, is an indication of feeling settled and "confirmed." It was a partial indication of the "lifted-up kingdom" that the king should have a palace of unwonted magnificence. This must have weighed all the more in the case of a nation which, not for its sacred things, nor for its king, nor for its people, had ever had as yet any adequate and worthy housing.

Ver. 3.—David took more wives. As matter of course, we do not look in this connection for any remarks to be made by the writer condemnatory of David's enlargement of the harem, or of his having an harem at all. Yet it is open to us to note how, at a time when polygamy was "winked at," and no sin was necessarily to lie on this account at the door of David, yet by this very thing he was undermining the peace and unity of his own family, the comfort of his declining years once and again, and the very stability of his house in the days of Solomon his son. The less necessitated we are to regard David's polygamy in the light of individual sin, the more emphatic in the light of history does the tendency of the practice proclaim itself as thoroughly and irredeemably bad.

Vers. 4—7.—The names of his children which he had in Jerusalem. The names of the children born to David in Hebron are given in ch. iii. 1—4. For a comparison of this list with that of ch. iii. 5—9, see that place. It will be observed that the present list agrees with that of Samuel in respect of eleven names, and with ch. iii. 5—8, so far as number goes, with all thirteen.

Vers. 8—12.—*An important victory over the Philistines.*

Ver. 8.—David . . . went out against them. From a careful comparison of this passage with the parallel and with 2 Sam. xxiii. 12—14, it appears likely that the meaning is that "David went out against them" after having "gone down" first to the "hold," probably at the "cave of Adullam" (ch. xi. 15—17). When it is

said that the Philistines went up to seek David, the sequel makes it evident that they did not seek him as friends. And it is to be remembered that the Philistines held territory near Jerusalem at this time, and to the north of it (1 Sam. xxxi. 7—9).

Ver. 9.—Spread themselves. The root, נִפְרַא, appears here for the וָרַא of the parallel place. So also again in ver. 13 of this chapter. In the valley of Rephaim; i.e. of giants, though some translate "healers," and yet others "chiefs." Though not Canaanites, they once held portions of Canaan. Their origin is very uncertain. Kalisch ("Commentary on Old Testament," p. 351) thinks they were descendants of Japheth (Gen. xiv. 5; xv. 20; Deut. ii. 9—11; iii. 11). The "valley" was south of Jerusalem, but whether more south-east or south-west is not certain; probably the former (Josh. xv. 8; xviii. 16; Isa. xvii. 5).

Ver. 10.—David inquired of God. The "inquiring" was made, as matter of course, through the high priest, and not merely, as we should say, in private prayer (Judg. i. 1, 3; xx. 23, 27; 1 Sam. xxiii. 2, 4; xxx. 8; 2 Sam. ii. 1). The directness of the Divine answer was some echo of the old reply when Judah was authorized to go up against the Canaanites (Judg. i. 2).

Ver. 11.—Baal-perazim; literally, *master of breaches*. Gesenius traces this meaning, through the intermediate idea of "possessor," to that (in this case, that *place*), which "possesses," i.e. is the subject of such a signal overwhelming as is here described, the scene of overwhelming defeats, like the irresistible rush of waters (Isa. xxviii. 21).

Ver. 12.—And when they had left their gods there. The parallel translates more literally, "And there they left," as we might also do here; and goes on to read "their images," in place of "their gods" (2 Sam. v. 21). These they burned with fire, according to the command of Deut. vii. 5, 25.

Vers. 13—17.—*Another victory over the Philistines.*

Ver. 13.—In the valley; i.e. the valley of Rephaim, as is expressly stated in the parallel place, though left in no obscurity here.

Ver. 14.—Go not up after them; turn away from them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. The meaning of the directions as here given is sufficiently evident, yet it is somewhat more forcibly expressed in the parallel place, "Thou shalt not go up," i.e. "against the Philistines" (see our tenth verse, and note the form of David's inquiry); "but fetch a compass behind them." The mulberry trees were evidently behind the Philistines. The Hebrew word for the trees here spoken of is לְבָנִים, and the correct rendering of it

is probably neither "mulberry" nor, as the Septuagint and Vulgate translate, "pear" trees. But judging from the probable derivation (תְּבַדֵּל, to weep), they were trees of the balsam species, and it seems that this is as far as we can safely conjecture. One of the latest authorities (see Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 398, 2nd edit.) pronounces it an "unknown species." The tree, strange to say, is only mentioned here and in the parallel place. A summary of opinions as to the tree intended may be found in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' ii. 439, and this is just sufficient to show that it is not as yet identified with any semblance of certainty. However, it is easy to understand how the balsam species, from which the exuding gum resembles "tears," might come by the name set forth in the present Hebrew root.

Ver. 15.—**A sound of going.** This is not a mere generic or longer form of expression to signify a sound itself. There is significance in the word "going." The sense of the Hebrew word would be thrown out more emphatically by such a rendering as, *the sound of steps* (literally, *stepping*). When the motion of the agitated leaves simulated the sound of steps, the stepping of men, then David and his army were to step forth to battle. Though the root of the "stepping" spoken of as heard in the trees is not identical with that of the "going" repeated twice in the remainder of the verse—Then thou shalt go out... for God is gone forth—yet it does alliterate to some extent with it, and rather creates the impression that it was intended to do so. However, the parallel place does not sustain this impression, inasmuch as a different word, "Thou shalt bestir thyself," is there employed, in place of the first

occurrence of our supposed alliteration, in the clause, "Thou shalt go out." There is something stirring to the imagination, and probably it was felt so by David and his men, in the signal unseen yet not unheard, and in a sense not of earth, but midway between earth and heaven. The very various voices of the various trees, according to the character of their foliage, may well set poetry going, and startle or fascinate imagination, as the case may be. The music of one tree or grove is as different from that of another as can be—listen to the difference between the melancholy plaint so unceasing of some plantation of firs, and the multitudinous, silvery, rippling of but one white poplar of good size. Presumably the sound in the present case more resembled that of the steady tramp of them that march.

Ver. 16.—**Gibeon.** The parallel reads *Geba*. As *Geba* and *Gibeon* were both situate very near to Jerusalem (on the north), as well as near to one another, both texts may be correct, and each mean what it says. But Isa. xxviii. 21 confirms the reading *Gibeon*. It is evident that *Gibeon* was no appropriate resting-place for the ark (ch. xiii. 3, 4; 2 Chron. i. 3). The nearness of the Philistines' approach to the city of Jerusalem marks their daring on the one hand, and the loud call now for the merciful interposition of Jehovah on behalf of his people. **Gazer.** Hebrew גָּזָר, both here and in the parallel because of the accent. Else the name is *Gezer* (גֶּזֶר). It was about two hours distant from *Gibeon*, and to the north of it (Josh. x. 33; xii. 12; xxi. 21; Judg. i. 29; ch. xx. 4), or "four Roman miles northward from Nicopolis ('Onomasticon'); now the large ruin of *Tell Jezar*" (Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 412).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*An important instance of the presence of the perceiving heart.* There is an obscurity about *Hiram* which certainly does not serve to diminish interest in him and his place in this narrative. The obscurity referred to affects, not merely himself and his reign, but rather what we now have to do with, the time, occasion, manner, of his introduction to David, and the commencement of the warm friendship between the two. This place, with the parallel, is the earliest scriptural mention of *Hiram*. Latr allusion to him (1 Kings v. 1) drops the significant testimony, "For *Hiram* was ever a lover of David." This was in the time of Solomon, and goes some way to remind us of other instances in which David won an ardent and generous affection from his fellows. The power to evoke this some natures possess in a high degree. All, however, that we know for certain is that *Hiram*, hearing of the rising fame of David, and no doubt aware of very much that had led on and up to it, from the time of *Goliath*, sent "messengers" to him. Their first messages consist presumably of hearty congratulations, and then go on to give assurance of *Hiram*'s readiness to help, by material and by workmen, to build a worthy royal house for David. It is scarcely to be supposed under these circumstances that *Hiram* had not received intimation, more or less

direct, that David would be likely to be in want of these things. Yet, whatever intimation Hiram had received, his response is large and gracious and full of free will. Something in this David saw, which perhaps no one else saw, but well worth notice.

I. DAVID SAW THAT ONE CONTINUOUS PURPOSE OF GOD WAS MOVING ON. It was one that affected "his people Israel." Israel he had chosen, Israel he had for his peculiar people, in Israel he had a fixed purpose, to this already for long ages he had held, and the ancient promise and covenant had been a growingly plain performing. This continuity by itself riveted attention, and brought a doubting, tired spirit home again to a strong peaceful faith, when any other circumstance, though it should seem but a trivial one, served to remind of it. Ought we not to be herein reminded of such things as these?—1. That all God's purposes, yes, all those that affect us as individuals only, are consistent, determined, marked by a faithful continuity in this respect, that they do not cease, do not *determine*, till they have fulfilled their appointed part. This may be less than we thought, if we thought at all, or it may be more. It may be different from what we thought, if we thought at all; and very certainly may be different from what we wished, because we so readily wish without any sovereign reason guiding our wish. But each little purpose, so to speak, of the Divine mind—little in our mistaken estimate—runs out to its end, and does not miss of the designed end. 2. That assuredly there must very often be Divine purpose in what happens, and as we think *merely happens*, in our experience. For the man who honestly believes in a supreme Governor of his life, this must command itself to reason. And what seriousness, reverence, sacredness, dignity, and deep-drawn consolation would it yield to any life, as fervently to believe this, so habitually to remember it! 3. That those purposes are upon a large scale. They affect the whole family in the individual, the whole community in the family or the class, that may be visibly and proximately the first affected, and so on, till the entire *race* shares in the advantage, and all the long-drawn-out subsequent ages illustrate its beneficence, as was literally the case for the *whole world* in the treatment and the checkered history of Israel. 4. That, because of the large scale on which Divine purpose is schemed: (1) It may easily elude our notice altogether if we are not very heedful. (2) It will present many difficulties, many obscurities, many *dark mysteries*, all due to the incapacity of our finite intellects to grasp the whole, to see the end from the beginning, and to be able to gaze all down the long abyss of time. (3) For all this, some vivid personal incident will occasionally be charged with suggestion and significance that will light up a vast area of human life in a moment of time, and will display convincingly how Divine knowledge, wisdom, purpose, are intersecting and traversing all the tangle and the labyrinth of fitful human working! And it was a gleam of convincing light of this kind that now shone in on David's mind.

II. DAVID SAW THAT CERTAIN DIVINE PROVIDENTIAL METHOD WAS BEING OBSERVED. In *the first place*, an individual human kingdom, a personal dynasty, is being "lifted up" for "the sake of the beloved people and the settled purpose." Never was there such a comment, such a clear criticism on the "Divine right of kings." Kings and the right of kings, it would certainly seem to be here testified, are means to an end, and then only is the right most Divine when used most divinely, and under most solemn sense of responsibility. The "people Israel" are those here called "*his* people," *i.e.* the people of the Lord, the Lord God. The "people Israel" are those whom he loves, are *what* he loves. It is not the "kingdom," nor the government, nor the land, nor the national bent and genius, nor even the king himself merely as such, that he loves, but the "people" Israel. "All is for their sakes," as St. Paul in later times said. This kingdom of David, this dynasty which he represented, of which he was to be such a brilliant exponent, were to count nothing in and of themselves. They were for the sake of something else. But passing this greater general consideration, *in the second place*, David saw tokens of Divine providential method in the willing heart, willing hand, willing speech, of a neighbouring king. The willingness and the generosity may not have been altogether unknown, but when all the circumstances were combined, and when we remember the exceptional position of Israel among nations that often wondered at Israel's God, often envied Israel's unseen mighty protection and defence, there could scarcely have been many precedents, scarcely many parallels, to be quoted.

All the rather was David secretly in deepest heart convinced of the reality of Divine interposition, of providential forces at work. When we allow that Hiram *had* received some "hints" and some intimation of the likely desire of David to build a house worthy of his people and royal state, we have gone as far as we are warranted in going. And to set against all the rest, if not against this also, we have here David's evident language, and the evident meaning and drift of it. David "*perceived*" certain things when Hiram "sent messengers, . . . and timber," or promise of it, and "masons and carpenters," or promise of them, and these "to build him," forsooth, David, "a house." He "*perceived*" that something unseen was here—a power, a hand, a person invisible, at work. That all this kindness should have come upon him; and that all this glory should be about to come upon him, and the quondam shepherd-boy, and more recently hunted refugee of mountain and cave and wilderness, should be about to be magnificently mansioned,—was demonstration to him that a mighty and benignant providence was at work; that it was bent on its own old purpose, and advancing by its own new methods as well. He found that Hiram's heart was in the hand of some One, nor did he mistake whose hand that must be, even the hand of him who holds all hearts. And as to that house that was to be, now at a glance he saw and spake it, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build." He was convinced that God was building.

III. DAVID RECOGNIZED MOST FULLY THE PRINCIPLE OF WHAT WE CALL HUMAN INSTRUMENTALITY. He recognized it now in a twofold sense. It is the same twofold sense we ever need to bear in mind and carry out in practice. 1. With deepest humility, with most unreserved confession, David pronounces himself, in all his growing power and likely splendour, *the servant* of God and his people, the instrument in the mighty and the good hand of God, the authorized means to a great end. That is all. That was honour for him, and honour enough. The Lord has confirmed "him king" over Israel, and "his kingdom" is lifted up on high, not for his own sake, not for any merit of his own, not for self-aggrandizement, not to feed personal luxury, pride, ambition, not for any most flattering, *mysterious* reason, but for his people Israel! When we do remember that we are servants of God, we cannot too well remember this—that it is this very relation we hold—of *servants*. We are to inquire for and to do, and to speak *his* will, and to have the least possible of our own. 2. He "*perceives*" that he is being made use of in order that he may fall in more than ever with God's work and service. His humility is real, therefore it does not swamp his sense of duty and responsibility. In one breath he admits himself *only* the instrument, *but* one divinely raised up, divinely fashioned, divinely called; and therefore he is both the more stirred to duty and sustained by the strongest sense of support. The really humble servant proves the really faithful servant. Happy David, that herein too the Lord had given him an heart to perceive and understand!

Vers. 8—12.—*The type of enmity on the alert, foiled by watchfulness and prayer.* From the conduct of our foe, not less than of the best friend, may we sometimes learn lessons of supreme importance and interest. Feeling and action both own to possibilities not seen on the surface, and seldom disturbed in their solemn depth. They are, however, always liable to be evoked, and, when evoked by any of the forms of enmity, they are almost sure to show in their own more intensified forms. It cannot be maintained that enmity is a mightier impelling principle than love, that the force of the one intrinsically surpasses that of the other; the contrary of this is to be maintained. But a very mighty force it is, and it has signal power to prevail in any conflict where indifference, lax energy, or but a slightly diminished watchfulness characterizes the object of it. Something of the skill of enmity and of its *habit* is set before us here, and what is said suggests to thought much left unsaid. We have here a little wayside picture of *enmity*. And we may observe in this aspect of the history—

L SIGNS OF WATCHFUL OBSERVATION ON THE PART OF AN UNREMITTING ENEMY. Men like to be at their ease, and rapidly does the tendency grow. We like to rest on our oars, and delicious awhile are sensation and thought. And these resting-times and resting-places are not merely welcome; they are necessities at certain intervals, they are the appointed rewards of certain conflicts and victory, and they are the preparation

for fresh effort. On the other hand, life is spent here in the presence of the foe, and one of watchful observation—the children of light not so wise in their generation nor so awake as he. Keen is the eye of enmity. It searches all round its own armoury for the weapon fittest for its purpose, and all round its opponent's armour to find the joint of his harness. And now, nothing goes on with David and Israel but—the Philistines know it, and take care to know it.

II. SIGNS OF CIRCUMSPECT AND FAR-SEEING OBSERVATION. The Philistines, whose chief leader we are not here told, do no doubt take great care to be apprised of all that is going on within the kingdom of Israel. And they can afford to let much pass without any counter moves on their part. They learn much, but it awakens no keen anxiety, no special interest, no practical activity. But an unusual note is heard at last; it is the note of warning; they hear it as the note of opportunity sounded, and of opportunity that must not slip by. They cannot afford to be inactive now. It is a time when, even if all depended on one throw, that throw must be ventured. They had known David as a boy; as a remarkable young man, but with a very doubtful future; as a persecuted refugee; as a very rising man; as king of part of a people; but the critical and vital point was now at length, when they "heard that he was anointed king over *all* Israel"—king over a united people, king over a people the whole of whose resources were now available and could be wielded as by one arm, king over a people of one mind and one enthusiastic heart. And this was what the wisdom of the enemy was equal to—to see and *act* as though it saw that the hour of a united enemy was the hour to strike, if haply it might break the power of that enemy at one stroke, or otherwise, that it was the hour most to be feared for himself. One sang—

"And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."

But there is another time when Satan trembles, and that is when he sees his enemy united, and the ranks of his enemy held well together. That "trembling" would be both more and more apparent but for the prompt and unequivocal activity he brings to bear on the situation, while others were but "trembling."

III. SIGNS OF PRACTICAL AND VERY DETERMINED RESOLUTION. Difficulty, danger, critical responsibility, *disarm* many, but *arm* these Philistines. The courage, the practical wisdom, is to be noted, though it be in a bad cause, in order that these may be the rather learnt and copied for the good cause. These Philistines do not timidly wait and put off a doubtful dangerous day; they court the conflict; they go "up to seek David;" they offer battle and give the challenge. Little time is lost before they are "spread" in battle array and everything is ready for the decisive verdict. Evident stress also is laid upon their unity. It is not only said that "all" the Philistines went up to seek David, but it is written by the historian as though the emphasis of a significant antithesis were intended. When the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over "all" Israel, they "all" went to seek him.

IV. SIGNS IN ALL THIS OF THE DERIVATION OF VERY MUCH OF HUMAN ENMITY. Strong is the resemblance both of nature and of method between the hostility of human foe and that exhibited by the source of all evil. It is abundantly well to note this resemblance, for could we persuade ourselves to see in our own malignant dispositions, ill will, and hostility the features that are then striving only too successfully to take form of the dark original of all evil, we should dread the presence in us, and dread few things more. The short gratification of that which must be, under any circumstances, ruled the lower side of our nature, would be then instinctively acknowledged too dearly bought, when the eye, the lip, the thought, the strong force of purpose, and the hand must all be lent to one in the background, so odious in himself, and so tyrannical as soon as ever his hold is once yielded to. The shapes and methods assumed by human enmity are in reality often nothing short of accurate copies of those of the great foe of God and man. Surely it would act as a deterrent influence in many a mind not yet gone too far, and in which it was not yet too late to interpose, if it were distinctly seen that as much as love, goodness, and friendship are of God, so much are hate and all the kinds of malignity, and in general *enmity* to a fellow-creature, of the devil. Let us observe, on the other hand, in this portion of the history, the *foil* of David in the presence of that enmity. 1. *Here is proof of a wakeful ear.* Many an opportunity is lost

for want of "ear to hear." And some things the most essential to hear are crowded out unheard because of the rush of sounds to the ear, hollow as ever sound could be. But the wakefulness of an open ear is here, and the irreparable does not happen, and the disastrous stroke does not fall upon a whole kingdom and people ere yet the tidings of the danger have reached the responsible persons. David might now have said, with the prophet (Isa. 1. 4), "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." And how much depends on this *daily* opening of our ear, and this opening of it in the *morning*, before the dangers of the day's life have opened upon us, instead of that opening of it that may come perchance at evening, or in the very night, or after some startling calamity, when all except the dead have no choice but to hear! Though Jesus first warned us, and after him some of the most solemn connection of all Scripture repeated the strain, how much do we lose by altogether under-estimating the message of the words, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear"! 2. *Here is proof of wakeful care.* The enemy's daring front and adventurous challenge scarcely anticipate David's firm front and readiness to accept the challenge. His preparedness is quite as noticeable as their initiating energy. Some initiating energies have much cause to repent of themselves, and court their own destruction; and it proved so now for the Philistines. The victory does not often lie with those that are "first in their own cause." David does not live every hour all in a tremble of apprehension and suspicion, it is true; but it is also true that he has wisely not allowed himself to live forgetful, unheedful of the constant proximity of a constant foe. He is not now caught napping. He is not found now lapped in luxury. He is not betrayed as one living in a fool's paradise, lulled in false peace, mistaking security for safety, choked by pride in the height and dignity of his position, and deceiving himself as though he were the unassailable and unimpregnable itself. The sound of alarm entered full sonorously into his ear, but no panic of alarm entered into his heart. Does the "foe" seek him, and insolently and defiantly scan his proportions and his armour? he does not forget that old matter of Goliath and the sling and stone on the one hand, nor is he the man, either by character or by the emergence of unguarded position, to hide himself or to have a moment's inclination to hide himself, but he "goes out to meet" the foe, well prepared to face him and, if God speak the word, to encounter him also in actual conflict. Nor does he forget the spirit of the old confidence and the source whence he derived his own confidence. "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the Name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." 3. *Lastly, here is proof positive of prayer.* David has shown the courage of the man and of the king and of the commander of God's people and army. He presents himself and them in front of the foe that courts the trial of battle. But before he lifts a hand, strikes a blow, draws a sword, he asks of the Lord. He asks for knowledge of duty, "Shall I go up?" He asks for warrant of the language which he may hold to his own people and to the defying foe. "Wilt thou deliver them into my hand?" This last thing he had been permitted to add in his forewarning to Goliath of what awaited him: "This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand; and I will smite thee . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel . . . for the battle is the Lord's" (1 Sam. xvii. 45-47). And he wishes to be able to do so again. There would be great advantage in being able to use confident language on the matter on this occasion also. God had occasionally permitted his own people to go to defeat (as he certainly does for our discipline and for after advantage permit us often to find defeat awhile), so that David might desire for his own heart's sake to be assured that this was *not* going to be the case now. But there was other reason why authority to speak on the matter of victory certain would be great advantage. He announces it to the foe, and it comes true, and then strikes a deep, lasting residuum of terror and of reverence for the next like occasion. He announces it to his own people, and it comes true; and with what confidence both towards their God and towards their king does it invest them in many a future! Prayer brings blessing, prayer brings knowledge, prayer strengthens and exhibits to just view that connection between himself and his weak creature and child, which the condescending Hearer of prayer loves to acknowledge.

Vers. 13-17.—*The faith that is content to leave self in the background and*

unhesitatingly obey God. One of the most remarkable of the characteristics of Scripture is its freedom from repetition and monotony, even when engaged on subjects that may very closely resemble one another in their matter. In the present instance, the connection, the subject, the time, all closely correspond with what has immediately preceded, and the important event or issue is identical. Yet how greatly the scene differs, and with what exceedingly quickened interest do we read of this second appearance and challenge of the Philistines! The general facts of the situation are still the same. The courage and determination, however, of the Philistines in repeating their attack so soon, and after so thorough and crushing a defeat, show well the stuff of which they were made, and offer an additional touch to the picture. David on his part repeats his inquiry addressed to One whom he had come to be well persuaded was "the God of his salvation." From this point the course of events differs and pursues a new and unwonted direction. David is divinely assured of victory over the enemy, but he is directed not to go up in the face of that enemy. He is to go to some plantation of trees, to await there a certain sound in them, to take that as the omen and sign that God is his Leader and the Leader of his hosts to the battle, and then to make his attack. Faith and practical obedience follow on the part of David, and the enemy suffer a great defeat, while David's fame sustains great advancement. Let us notice some special peculiarities that mark the ordering of this battle, and observe the probable lessons of them.

I. A DISTINCT LESSON OF PUTTING SELF INTO THE BACKGROUND. As surely as there are cases innumerable when the active exercise of our best practical powers is the appointed and expected test of our earnestness and reality, so surely are there some cases when we are permitted, invited, nay, even commanded, to approve a dutiful spirit, in "standing still to see." Vast is the difference between the man whose disposition it is always "to stand still and see," and him who, when the command comes, can consent to renounce the endeavour and the effort and the force of self, and so "stand still and see." The one is the disposition of supineness and even sloth, the other calls for the exercise of a very high measure of self-command and temperate restraint. The instance before us is remarkable in this aspect on every account. It is a warrior, who is to lay aside some of the most characteristic qualities of the warrior. He is not to foresee, not to provide, not to prepare, for the battle! It is a warrior, who was to the manner born, and who has intrinsically not a few of the highest gifts of the warrior. It is a warrior the very day before the battle, when desire and chivalry and courage are near their height. It is a warrior also the day after an engagement; he, together with his hosts, is flushed with triumphant conflict, elated with success, and feeling that he is safe for another decisive victory. Nature tells us of such a man and of such a host, that they burn for the fray. The Divine word, however, told them now that they must count themselves and their martial ardour and their very bravery as nothing. As little like brave soldiers as possible, they are not so much as to confront their foes face to face, but to steal unawares to the rearward of them. The battle is to be won, but it plainly is not to be by the strength of human arm, nor by the force of human wisdom. It will be won in a way to humble the pride of self, to cast self into the shade, most of all to lower it in its own deep conviction, and to exalt the presence and power of another.

II. A DISTINCT INSTANCE OF THE FAITH AND OBEDIENCE THAT CONSENTED TO THAT LESSON. "David therefore did as God commanded him." We have here a very simple but very clear case of faith. The directions given to David were not merely contrary to individual predilection and character, but they were contrary to the methods and discernment of sense. David does neither disdain these in his mind nor practically disregard them in his act on that account. By faith he goes to the trees; by faith he expects and waits for the appointed sign there; faith pours a stream of confidence into him when he hears that signal for battle and "the sound of going in the tops of the trees,"—simulates perfectly for him "the going forth before him" of God to "smite the host of the Philistines." To the temper of the typical warrior and general all this would have been equally unnatural and trying but for the force of faith. There are times when sense and unbelief, superstition and the love of the marvellous revel just herein, that is to say, in a "sign." But this sign will be something very different from one so simple as "the sound of going in the tops of the trees." This was no miracle, except as faith had power to transmute it into the best form of miracle. Faith can feed on what shall seem slender material, and can find richest enjoyment in what

shall seem familiar trifles to sense. This is the grandeur of faith, when nothing is great, nothing little to it except as they bring the invisible to sight, and make things that are not as though they were. That faith then becomes the secret aid and precursor to obedience.

III. A DISTINCT GAIN OF RESPECT, FEAR, REVERENCE, FOR THE MAN WHO RENOUNCED SELF AND ACCEPTED THE GUIDE OF FAITH. "The fame of David went out into all lands; and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations." This was the direct consequence of his having surrendered himself entirely into the hands of the great Commander himself, the Lord of all hosts. How often had Saul used all earthly power and been impatient to do so, so that he could not wait even for the right human agency! But he failed, and for every failure lessened his influence among those round him far and wide. God made the victories of David marvellous, and therein made him marvellous, from the time of Goliath up to the present moment. To trust self and self's well-nigh superhuman exertions shall still leave a man an utter failure. To trust God and rigidly follow his bidding will exalt a man, and will save him from his own liability to error and inevitable loss of reputation thereby. From all this narrative we may be very forcibly reminded of two things. 1. How God would teach us that it may be often dangerous to go up *direct* against even the very worst of foes—our spiritual foes. 2. That with these foes it is above all necessary to have God himself to fight before us, for us, with us.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—"The Lord . . . confirmed him king." To many readers this phraseology seems simply the language of superstition, to be classed with similar language in which primitive and heathen nations are wont to attribute the triumphs of their warriors and the greatness of their kings to their tutelar and national deities. But believers in the inspiration and authority of Holy Scripture will see in this declaration an assurance of that wise and watchful care which God exercises over all men and all communities, and which is, for wise purposes, so clearly and devoutly related and recorded in the documents of Hebrew history.

I. THE QUALIFICATIONS AND THE PREPARATION OF RULERS ARE FROM GOD. The strength of character, wisdom and sagacity, firmness, justice, clemency, affability,—all qualities that make an able ruler of men, are the endowment of the supreme Lord. In the case of David we observe peculiar gifts lavishly bestowed. The same providential care is to be recognized in the long and severe discipline by which the son of Jesse was fitted for a throne. It was doubtless this preparatory training, combined with the sore experience through which the nation had passed, which rendered David's accession so popular.

II. THE JUST EXERCISE OF CIVIL POWER IS DIVINELY AUTHORIZED. The Lord having prepared David for the throne and the throne for him, the monarch proceeded to fulfil his royal duties with the happy assurance that the hearts of his people were subject to him, and with the knowledge that he was supported by faithful and powerful allies. It cannot, indeed, be said that monarchy is the favourite form of government with the Lord of all; for when he gave Israel a king it was in condescension to their infirmities. The *form* of government is of secondary importance, but the necessity of civil rule is written upon the constitution of man and of society. Equity, impartiality, righteousness,—these are the principles of all true moral rule, human and Divine. The governor who is guided by personal ambition, who is the prey of petty prejudices, who is given to intrigues, who rules by oppression, is no true king of men.

III. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF A DIVINE COMMISSION GIVES POWER AND GRACE TO THE EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY. "David perceived that the Lord had confirmed him king." Thus his faith was strengthened and his courage was sustained. The man who, in the fulfilment of life's duties, cannot see beyond his own purposes and plans, is for all high intents enfeebled by this unworthy view of his life; whilst he who recognizes that he is the "minister of God," is supported by this conviction, his aims are ennobled and his influence is hallowed by it. Especially must this be the case with those whose influence and responsibility are unusually great.

IV. IF AUTHORITY IS FROM GOD, ACCOUNTABILITY IS TO GOD. Some rulers have been called to account by their fellow-potentates and some by their subjects. There is, however, danger lest the powerful should forget their inevitable responsibility. At the bar of God all kings must stand; at his throne they too must sue for mercy, when there they take their places with their subjects, as before the highest and the final tribunal. “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.”—T.

Vers. 9—11.—*The God of battles.* This is one of the many passages in the Old Testament where God is represented as presiding over and prospering the military expeditions of the Israelites. Rationalists see in such passages nothing more than evidence that the Hebrews were a warlike people, and that they, like other nations, attributed their successes in war to the intervention and favour of their Deity. But those who believe in the inspiration and authority of Scripture cannot be satisfied with such an explanation. The text suggests some reflections which may cast light upon this difficulty.

I. THERE IS A GENERAL SENSE IN WHICH JEHOVAH WAS AND IS THE LORD OF HOSTS, THE GOD OF BATTLES. It would be barbarous and absurd to suppose that the benevolent Ruler of all prefers war in itself to peace, that he takes pleasure in the carnage and agony, the bereavement and desolation, which are distinctive of war. But as all strength and valour, all foresight, skill, and patience are his gifts, to him must ultimately be traced the force, the generalship, by which victories are won.

II. THERE IS A DIVINE PROVIDENCE WHICH OVERRULES THE CONFLICTS OF THE NATIONS. There can be no question that the course of human history has been, to a large extent, governed by the wars which have occupied so much of the energy and have consumed so much of the blood and the treasure of mankind. We have read of “the fifteen decisive battles of the world.” They who believe in the providential government of the world at all can scarcely refuse to believe that the warfares of the nations have been permitted and overruled for good by God. Great principles, even principles of a moral kind, have sometimes been fought upon the field of battle. Civilization and barbarism, slavery and freedom, brute force and enlightenment, have thus contended together for the mastery and the victory.

III. THERE WERE SPECIAL REASONS WHY GOD SHOULD HAVE INTERESTED HIMSELF IN THE WARS OF THE JEWS. 1. The contests between Israel and Israel’s enemies were contests between a morally superior and certain morally inferior races. When wars took place between the Israelites and the Canaanites or Philistines, it is plain to every student of history that the victory of Israel was the victory of monotheism and morality over idolatry and the most flagrant and disgusting vice. The cause of Philistia was the cause of heathenism, cruelty, and pollution; the cause of David was that of comparative justice, purity, and spirituality. 2. The victories of Israel furthered the best interests of mankind. Had Israel been subjugated or annihilated, the best prospects of the human race would have been clouded with awful darkness. The independence and nationality of the Hebrews formed a distinct step forward in the march of humanity. 3. The triumphs of David were a link in that chain which led to the redemption of mankind. We cannot separate the Old Testament, historically or religiously, from the New. The kingdom and the conquests of David have relation to the kingdom and the conquests of him who was Son of David and Son of God.—T.

Ver. 12.—*Hatred of idolatry.* The conduct of David, in directing that the idols of the Philistines should be “burned with fire,” arose from the fervour of his religious feelings and his contempt for idolatrous usages. It must always be borne in mind, in reading of the wars between Israel and Philistia, that these, like other wars recorded in Old Testament history, were more social and religious than political. Isolated from surrounding nations, the people of Israel were providentially appointed to be witnesses to the one true God. Hence their repugnance to and hatred of polytheism in all its offensive and degrading manifestations.

I. IDOLATRY IS DISHONOURING TO GOD. It is the substitution of God’s work for himself. Idolaters “worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.” Whether adoration be paid to the handiwork of the great Maker of all or

to the workmanship of men's own hands, God is robbed of the reverence and service which are due to him alone.

II. IDOLATRY IS UNREASONABLE AND VAIN. How strikingly is this portrayed in the hundred and fifteenth psalm!—"They have mouths, but they speak not," etc.; "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." It is the absurd and superstitious confidence that men have placed in idols which has rendered religion the laughing-stock of the thoughtless and superficial.

III. IDOLATRY IS DEGRADING AND DEBASING TO THOSE WHO PRACTISE IT. History abounds with proofs of this. The greater the hold which idolatry has over a nation, and the more cruel, sensuous, and capricious are the deities worshipped, the more degraded is the moral condition of the community. We know well how sunk were the Philistines and their neighbours, by reason of their religion, in the depths of vice and sin.

IV. IDOLATRY IS DOOMED TO PERISH AND TO GIVE PLACE TO A PURER AND NOBLER FAITH. David's "rough and ready" method of dealing with the Philistine "gods" was natural to his impulsive disposition. We are assured by inspired predictions that the time shall come when the idolatrous peoples, illuminated by the rays of the gospel, shall of their own accord "cast their idols to the moles and to the bats." So far from the abolition of idolatry being the precursor to universal irreligion, we have every reason to believe that upon the ruins of heathenism shall be reared the stately and holy temple of Christianity, in which an enlightened and regenerated race shall offer unceasing adorations to the one God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Saviour of all men.—T.

Ver. 15.—"A sound of going." In his frequent contests with the Philistines, David was assured of the constant support and guidance of the God of hosts. The king sought the honour of his God, and God prospered the exploits of his servant. On the occasion referred to in this passage, Divine wisdom is said to have directed the strategy of the army of Israel, to have indicated the moment of assault, and to have assured the warriors of certain victory. The signal was, strange to say, "a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees." This incident has usually been regarded as indicative of the tokens of the Divine presence accorded to such as are engaged in the spiritual service of their God. We are reminded of—

I. THE POWERLESSNESS AND INSUFFICIENCY OF MEN FOR THE SPIRITUAL CONFLICT. Christians have a warfare to wage against foes many and mighty, and for this warfare their native resources are inadequate, scanty, and feeble. If we know ourselves we must needs look above, to the Strong for strength, to the Wise for wisdom.

II. THE GRACIOUS TOKENS OF A DIVINE PRESENCE AND CO-OPERATION. The "sound of going" told David that God was near—was on his side. God's people are never left without indications of the Divine presence, and these assure them that they are not alone, that the "Lord of hosts is with them." Sometimes by events in his providence, sometimes by lessons from his Word, sometimes by the suggestions of his Spirit, he gives his people to understand, in the hour of their need and helplessness, that he is on their side.

III. THE DIVINE SIGNAL FOR HIS PEOPLE'S ACTION. As we have not only to know but also to do God's will, we need not only revelation of truth but summons to practical service. God gives his soldiers the watchword, the signal to advance. Then is the moment to "go forward," to repel and to defeat the foe. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" It is well that we should not run before the word is given; yet it will not do to tarry when he directs us to advance.

IV. THE OMEN AND PRESAGE OF TRUE VICTORY. When the sound of going was heard in the tree-tops, it was as the movement of angels' wings; the mighty rushing was as the tramp of the host of God, the earnest of victory to David's arms. If the Lord our God goes forth with us to the spiritual war, we shall surely overcome. Ours shall be the victory of faith, even that which overcometh the world.—T.

Ver. 17.—Fame and fear. David, notwithstanding his follies and sins, was "the man after God's own heart." Devout, obedient, diligent, courageous, he was eminently adapted both to govern the nation, to lead the army, to promote the revival of true

religion. Providence exalted him to a lofty position and enabled him to adorn the station to which he was raised. Hence so large a part of the historical books of the Old Testament are occupied with the events of his reign; and hence he is so frequently alluded to in the national annals, and so often quoted both by our Lord and by his inspired apostles.

I. DAVID'S FAME. It was the fame of: 1. *A successful warrior.* A man of war from his youth, he owed his throne to his valour and generalship. 2. *A powerful king.* When he wielded the forces of a nation, God gave him victory over many enemies. 3. *A pious man.* His steadfastness in worshipping the true God, his liberality in providing for the services of the sanctuary, his habitual devotion, all were well known, and stamped David as a truly religious man. 4. *A sacred poet and musician.* It is as “the sweet singer of Israel” that he is held in lasting remembrance, and remembered with gratitude both widespread and sincere.

II. DAVID'S FEAR. 1. His *subjects* held him in honour and had respect to his righteous laws. 2. His *officers and troops* were devoted to his person and obeyed his authoritative behests. 3. *Traitors* stood in awe of his vigour, promptness, and power. 4. His *alliance* was sought by neighbouring nations, who dreaded to have him as an enemy, and who courted his friendship. 5. His *foes* feared him, for he defeated their armies and held themselves in subjection and tribute.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. All greatness is *from God*, to whom all praise is due. 2. The great are *responsible* for the *use* of their power to him who is “King of kings and Lord of lords.”—I.

Vers. 1, 3—7.—*The house and the home: wisdom and folly.* The first verse of this chapter presents the character of David in a very different aspect from that of the other verses in our text. His conduct in building himself a house was in contrast with that in turning his home into a harem. We have, then—

I. THREE THOUGHTS CONCERNING DAVID'S ACTION. We judge: 1. *That he was wise in building himself a royal mansion.* (Ver. 1.) It would be likely to give an aspect of stability to his throne, and thus add to the security of his position. It was due to his family that they should have the full benefit of his exaltation. It was wise to make domestic life as attractive to himself and as honourable in the eyes of his people as he could make it appear. By taking greatest pains, and even going outside the limits of Israel to furnish himself with a “house of cedar,” David was doing the wise and right thing. 2. *That he was foolish and wrong in multiplying the number of his wives.* (Ver. 3.) He departed from God's intention, if not from his positive precept, when he “took more wives” at Jerusalem. He availed himself of his royal position to do that which was unbecoming and inexpedient as well as at variance with national usage. It was in accordance with the promptings of the flesh, but out of accord with the teachings of his better judgment. 3. *That his error outweighed his wisdom.* Better far the humble structure with one family dwelling therein in harmony and love, than the imposing mansion wherein dwelt domestic jealousy and strife. David's after history only too sadly proves that he laid the foundation of his worst troubles when he “took more wives” to his royal palace and converted what would have been a happy home into an intriguing harem. His folly outweighed his wisdom. We turn to regard—

II. THE APPLICATION OF THESE THOUGHTS TO OURSELVES. And we conclude that the wise Christian man will: 1. *Spare no trouble to provide an inviting home.* The Christian home is the hope of the world. As it becomes more extensively the centre and source of piety and purity, of righteousness and wisdom, so the kingdom of God will come on the earth. Therefore let the Christian home have everything about it that is attractive; let it be strong and beautiful; let all labour and care be expended on it that it may have all possible things to please the pure eye and gratify the cultivated taste. 2. *Put all needful restraint on himself.* He will not merely not “take more wives”—refrain from that which is positively disallowed by the society in which he moves—but guard himself against all indulgence which will injure his influence at home or leave a stain on his reputation outside. 3. *Remember that one serious mistake may mar much good.* As David has certainly lost something of the lustre with which his name would otherwise have shone, and now exerts somewhat less of power than he would otherwise have wielded, because he did not adhere to

true domestic morality, so shall we inevitably and irrecoverably lose weight, influence, usefulness, as well as peace and gladness of heart, if we make any one serious mistake in the ordering of our life. This is true of the choice of our vocation, of the selection of our friends, and (more especially) of the decision we make as to the lifelong alliance of marriage. How many have cut their joy and usefulness in twain by one sad error here! How needful in this respect, above most other matters, to act not on impulse but conviction, to ask the guidance of the Divine Friend, to act as those who are responsible for all the great choices of our life!—C.

Ver. 2.—*Selfward, Godward, manward.* Here is—

I. SOMETHING ON WHICH DAVID COULD CONGRATULATE HIMSELF. He “perceived that the Lord had confirmed him king . . . his kingdom was lifted up on high.” He observed that the first success was being satisfactorily sustained, and that his power was being felt beyond the limits of his own land. We may congratulate ourselves when we have made a good beginning, whether of school life, or of apprenticeship, or of management of affairs or official position, or of alliance with another, or of life itself; but we have greater reason for congratulating ourselves when the first start has settled down into lasting strength, has solidified and become an established success. Too often the first brilliancy proves to be nothing more than the shooting blaze of the rocket. It is well when it proves to be nothing less than the lasting light of the beacon-fire. We have also reason to congratulate ourselves when success rises so high as to attract the attention of those beyond our own circle; we are then making ourselves felt as well as known; and while a wise man will care but little for the mere breath of fame, a good man, if he be also a wise man, will care much that he is a power and not a cypher in the world.

II. SOMETHING WHICH TURNED DAVID'S THOUGHTS TO GOD. “David perceived that the Lord had confirmed him.” He had shown much statesmanlike ability since he had been made king, and might have been, as we all are, under the temptation to attribute his success to his own sagacity. But he did not yield to the enemy if thus assailed. He let his prosperity direct his thoughts to him from whom cometh down every good gift. So also shall we, if the spirit of Christ be in us. We shall let all things speak to us of the Father, of his presence with us, his mindfulness of us, his love toward us, his wisdom in all his dealing with us. And we shall not permit our prosperity to do that which it has a tendency to do—elevate us in our own esteem, and hide the Divine Author of all our mercies from the view of our soul. We shall see that it, with all other experiences, turns our thoughts in reverential love to him.

III. THE TRUE ASPECT IN WHICH PROSPERITY SHOULD BE VIEWED. “His kingdom was lifted up on high, because of his people Israel,” or “for his people Israel's sake” (2 Sam. v. 12). David perceived that God had exalted him, not only nor chiefly that he and his family might be distinguished, but that the nation might thereby be blessed; that he might confer on the people over whom he was to rule the unspeakable blessings of a pious and upright reign. It is an admirable thing in rulers when they “perceive” that they are lifted up for the sake of the people, and not for their own sake. It is an equally desirable if not an equally important thing that all who occupy posts of prominence and power—statesmen, magistrates, councillors, presidents, ministers, secretaries, etc.—should perceive the same truth, should regard their elevation in the same light. If God sends us prosperity, power, influence, it is not only that we may rejoice therein ourselves, but it is also, and principally, that we may use our opportunity to confer light, healing, help, hope, blessedness, on those who are less favoured than we are, and whom we can reach with our ministering hand.—C.

Vers. 8-17.—*The spiritual campaign.* Our Christian life is no holiday excursion or exhilarating walk; it is an earnest battle, or rather a protracted campaign. We may be reminded here—

I. THAT THERE ARE NOTORIOUS ENEMIES WITH WHICH EVERY CHRISTIAN MAN MUST EXPECT TO FIGHT. David knew well that he would have to fight the Philistines before he could gain full possession of his throne. They were bent on disputing his power, and it was inevitable that a series of engagements would take place between the servants of Jehovah and these idolaters. “All the Philistines went up to seek

David" (ver. 8). When a man becomes the servant of the great King, he knows that his spiritual adversaries will seek to slay him; or, if he does not, he soon discovers that no one is more certain to be assailed by temptations than he who has just entered the army of the living God. 1. "*The world*" will come up against him—the various hostile influences which breathe and move in unregenerate or unsanctified society. 2. "*The flesh*" will assail him—all those impulses toward evil which are born of the lower appetites and passions. 3. "*The devil*" will seek to "devour" him—the "principalities and powers," the spiritual forces which, though unseen, are strong opponents in the field.

II. THAT HE MUST CONSULT THE WILL OF GOD IN THE CONDUCT OF THE CAMPAIGN. "David inquired of God" (ver. 10); "David inquired again of God" (ver. 14); "David did as God commanded him" (ver. 16). The King of Israel was far from relying on his own generalship; and when he had succeeded so well (vers. 11, 12), his good fortune did not tempt him to presume; he still inquired of God, and acted in strict accordance with Divine direction. This spirit of inquiry and obedience must be ours also. We must not lean on our own understanding, but ask for the guidance of his Spirit, both for his direct illumination and for his help through the written Word; and when we have been victorious, we must see that the spirit of presumption is not admitted, but carefully excluded, and we must still inquire and obey.

III. THAT HE SHOULD SEEK TO INFILCT UPON THE ENEMY A COMPLETE DEFEAT. David not only smote the enemy (ver. 11), but he burnt their gods with fire (ver. 12). And again he smote and pursued them "from Gibeon even to Gazer" (ver. 16). It is our wisdom to extirpate our enemy; not only to stun but to slay the spiritual foe. It must be war *à outrance* or it will prove to be unsuccessful. Nothing can be more dangerous and unwise than to maintain a dubious and wavering contest with some besetting sin. We are to be conquerors, "more than conquerors," completely and thoroughly successful, as generals who not only keep possession of their ground, but drive the enemy before them and take possession of their camp, seizing or burning their goods.

IV. THAT HE MUST BE CAUTIOUS AS WELL AS COURAGEOUS. God did not allow David to fight the Philistines when he would have had to engage them at a disadvantage. He instructed his servant to adopt a plan more suited to the occasion (vers. 14, 15). We are not to expect victory from God if we are negligent of the means we take to win it. If we are obviously unequal to the task under one set of conditions, we must change them and place ourselves in more favourable ones.

V. THAT HE MUST ASCRIBE THE VICTORY TO THE DIVINE ARM. David said, "God hath broken in," etc. (ver. 11). Our spirit, if not our language, must be that of the psalmist, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us," etc.—C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Hiram and David.* The act of Hiram here in sending messengers to David with timber and masons and carpenters to build a house for himself, shows how David's influence had made itself felt far and near. We are furnished with the reason of this influence (see ch. xi. 9). It was because "the Lord was with him." Thus it ever is with the Christian: "The Lord is with him." Hence his influence. Christ *in us* is the mighty power for a holy life and for producing a permanent impression. Men like Hiram will pay homage to this, however morally distant they may be from conversion to God. And this is the power the true Christian should seek to possess, and the influence he should wield. "And David perceived that the Lord had confirmed him king over Israel, for his kingdom was lifted up on high, *because of his people Israel.*" Observe the latter part of this passage. Kings are to remember *why* they are kings. It is on account of God's kingdom and God's people. When they forget their relation to God, God's people, and God's work, they forget their true mission in God's world. "By *me* kings reign." The subject should never forget the relation in which he stands to God; how much less should the *king* forget it!—W.

Vers. 8—12.—*First battle in the valley of Rephaim.* No sooner was David anointed than the Philistines were stirred up in opposition. This opposition arose, doubtless, from the conviction that, if he were established on the throne, he would take revenge on them for the national dishonour at the battle of Gilboa, in which Saul was

slain. They therefore resolved, before his throne was consolidated, to accomplish his destruction. David's characteristic feature was, in every emergency of this kind, to cast himself upon God and seek his guidance. The assurance of victory was clear and unqualified: "And the Lord said, . . . Go up, for I will deliver them into thine hand." The result of the battle was a great victory for Israel. Another feature in David's character was to ascribe all victory to God. "Then David said, 'God hath broken in upon mine enemies by mine hand like the breaking forth of waters.' Observe, he calls himself the Lord's 'hand.' This is our true relation to God at all times. Ourselves and all we have are but the 'hand' to be put into God's hand to use. Observe, too, that David burns the 'gods' which the Philistines, in the hurry and confusion of flight, had left behind. They were no temptation to *him* to idolatry, but they might have been to some among his ranks; therefore every vestige of idolatry shall be stamped out and every temptation removed. In all our battles for the Lord, if we would have him with us and ensure success, every idol must be stamped out and God alone exalted. It must be Christ and Christ alone in every heart and before every eye.—W.

Vers. 13—17.—*Second battle in the valley of Rephaim.* The utter discomfiture of the Philistines and the victory of Israel had filled the former with alarm, and a second attempt was made against Israel. David again cast himself upon the Lord. This time the mode of attack by David was, at the command of God, to be varied. The attack was not forbidden, but, instead of advancing against the Philistines openly, David was to strike off in such a direction as to turn their flank and to come upon them from the front of the mulberry trees or baca bushes. An important spiritual truth underlies this part of the narrative. In this second attack it would only have been natural that David should have adopted the same mode as before, especially when his plans had met with such success. But, however right and in every respect preferable that course might have appeared, it was not God's way. God will have his people entirely dependent upon *himself*, and not upon *past experiences*. The manna gathered to-day will not do for to-morrow. It must be gathered each day afresh. The successful way in the past may not be his way in the future, and must never be relied on. It is not past dealings or ways with us; it is *himself*. The look of the soul in every step must be upward. I must put nothing—not even God's *past* ways with me in life—between my soul and him. It must be God, and God alone, *all the way*. And "the sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees," as the sign of God's leading, is not without meaning. It indicates still the *upward* look. The sign was to come from *above*. There the *eye* and the *ear* too were to be directed. It was nothing *in its self*, any more than any *ordinance or means* of grace. It was an "outward sign" of an "inward" and deeper reality—God; "God is gone forth before thee to smite the host of the Philistines." The breeze of *wind* moving the tops of the mulberry trees was the vehicle of the Holy Spirit—God's presence going before, which is *at all times* the Christian's safety, strength, and victory.—W.

Ver. 10.—*Inquiring of God concerning common things.* Explain the anxiety of the situation in which David was placed, and show what he *might* have done. From the point of view of the skilful general, he might have counted his forces, estimated their strength, set them on vantage-ground, drawn out a plan of battle, and, swayed by his own energy, he might have led them on to victory. But then he would only have acted as Saul had acted. He would have taken up the position of the independent sovereign, rather than that of the prince and vicegerent of Jehovah. It was important that, at the very outset of his kingly career, he should make it publicly and distinctly known that he was king only as Jehovah's servant. He could not make this known better than by "inquiring of the Lord" on the first occasion of national anxiety. It is always of great importance that we *start* right. But it might be said that this was only a business matter, and so quite within the power of David to arrange, and he need not "inquire of God" at all about it. That sentiment is a common, but a sadly mistaken one. It divides our life into two parts, the one of which we can manage ourselves, but for the other we need the help of God. There can really be no distinctness of the "sacred" and the "secular." There can properly be

no circle drawn round within which alone prayer can be acceptable. Nothing interests us that does not interest our God. "In *everything*, by prayer and supplication, . . . we may make known our requests unto him." This may be further enforced.

I. **WHAT IS THE GOD-SPHERE?** The difficulties into which men get, and the subtle self-seeking they manifest, when they try to make the God-sphere limited and narrow. The awakened and sincere heart is prepared to say before God—

"Take my body, spirit, soul;
Only thou possess the whole."

The God-sphere is a man's whole life, his whole thought, his *every* interest. Nothing is too great for God to compass; nothing too small for him to use and glorify. The things we count most common—air and sunshine and rain—are his. And the things in our lives that seem most trivial fit into his great plan and should be referred to him. Illustrate from the teachings of the Apostle James, that our very "journeys," our very "buyings and sellings," must be made dependent on the Lord's will (Jas. iv. 13-15). Modern sentiment tends to limit the sphere within which prayer is appropriate; it is assumed that it should not deal with the material world, which is under fixed *law*. But law is not something out beyond the control of God—or we misname him; for there is something greater than he. All laws are within the God-sphere, so we may "inquire of God" about them.

II. **WHAT IS GOD'S CLAIM WITHIN HIS SPHERE?** That everything shall be referred to him, and in everything his counsel and direction shall be taken. Illustrate from David's feeling of the claims of the theocracy. The entire life of the Israelitish nation being the God-sphere, absolutely everything had to be referred to him, and he recognized and punished all failures to meet his claim. By the mouth of his prophet the claim is distinctly expressed: "For all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." This claim may be shown in detailed application to the circumstances of our lives. The kind of reference to God takes different forms for different kinds of things.

III. **THE OBEDIENCE OF MEN IS BETTER TESTED BY THE LITTLE THAN BY THE GREAT.** Practical observation of life proves that it is harder to do little things in a right spirit than to do great ones. Many a man stands well before mighty swords and spears, and falls before a pebble slung by a youth. Few of us can stand the serious testing of the commoner scenes and relations of our lives. Yet the Divine testings come most frequently in connection with *them*; and sometimes God even makes us *do nothing*—wait; and he watches to see whether, even concerning *this*, we will "inquire of him."—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*Loyalty to the one God.* It is noted that, in the excitement of their defeat the Philistines left behind them their idol-images, and that, as a wise and prudent act as well as a truly religious one, David had them all destroyed by fire. This at once made a public testimony of their vanity and helplessness, and prevented their exerting any evil influence on David's own people, whose history shows that they were very sensitive to the attractions of idolatry. "The practice of carrying images of the gods to battle was common among the nations of antiquity, and arose from the belief that there was virtue in the images themselves, and that military success would be obtained by means of them. A similar belief seems to have induced the Israelites to carry the ark of the covenant with them to battle in the days of Eli." Comparing this passage with the answering one in 2 Sam. v. 21, margin, we may assume that the images were carried as trophies to Jerusalem, and, after being exhibited there, were destroyed by fire. David's loyalty to the one God was shown in the vigorous destruction of these rival gods. This, however, must not be confounded with religious persecution. David had a recognized right to deal as he pleased with the spoils of battle; and he was in no way bound to recognize the sanctity which the Philistines might be pleased to attach to their idol-figures. Distinguish between the destruction of idol-figures and the persecution of idol-worshippers. Man is not alone. He has often to act for others, for the family, the class, or the nation. In this way David acted on this occasion. Show what idol-gods may be about now, within reach of our children, etc. We do not call

them *idols*, but they are such if they attract and draw away from God, or push him out of his rightful place—*first* in heart and lip and life.

I. MAN MAY NOT INTERFERE WITH HIS NEIGHBOUR'S RELIGION. That is, not in any physical way. He may by moral forces—by argument, by persuasion, but not by force, in either private spheres of social life or public spheres of law and magistracy. And yet it has taken all the Christian ages to get this truth taught to men, and it is only half learned yet. A modern preacher says, “What a blunder persecution for religious convictions is! Has there ever been a disability put upon religious belief, has there ever been a persecution short of absolute extermination, that has not strengthened the faith it was meant to discourage? Persecution drives men in upon their convictions—makes them hold more firmly by their principles.” Yet we must as clearly see that we are held responsible for our neighbour's religion, so far as the use of moral forces is concerned. The sense of this responsibility is the impulse of all *missionary* labour. We must preach Christ's kingdom, and with all moral suasion “compel them to come in.”

II. MAN MAY KEEP HIS NEIGHBOUR'S RELIGION FROM INTERFERING WITH HIS. And in resisting he may find it necessary to use *physical* forces. David would not have been justified in going to Philistia and burning other people's idols. Had he done so, he would have been very properly resisted. But when these idols were left behind, as the spoil of the victors, he was quite justified in destroying them, and so preventing them from becoming a snare to his people.

Apply to the agencies of moral and religious mischief in our day, such as evil literature, self-indulgent pleasures, infidel maxims, etc. We are bound in our loyalty to God to keep these away—to take them and burn them, if need be, and so keep them away from our children and our servants. We should realize that, if the day of idolatrous *images* is passed, *things*—artistic things, symbolic things, literary things—may and often do become the most fascinating and degrading idol-forces.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Signs and sounds of the Divine presence.* The circumstances connected with the second enterprise of the Philistines are more fully detailed; and it seems the design of the chronicler to remind us that, in answer to prayer and dependence, God may not only give a general approval, but also minute and careful directions, and such as may involve waiting on him and watching for the right situation and the right moment. In some manifest and impressive way the Divine presence would be declared, and the Divine will made known. Often God finds it necessary to teach his people that he must be waited *for* as well as waited *on*. A sound as of marching or stepping would presently be heard; it would be a rustling of the leaves of the baca trees, as if a wind were passing through them; and this would be the sign that the heavenly host had come to assure the victory; and immediately upon hearing this sign, David was to act with vigour; he was to “bestir himself,” or be sharp. “The sound of a going in the tops of the trees” had a double significance. It was the sound of the viewless march of “the Lord going out before him to smite the host of the Philistines.” It was the sound of God going forth to smite their gods, even as he smote the gods of Egypt (comp. Ps. xxix. 4).

I. THE DIVINE PRESENCE RESPONDS TO MAN'S DEPENDENCE AND PRAYER. To his *dependence*, which is the appropriate state of mind and feeling. To his *prayer*, which is the appropriate mode of expressing the right feeling. That which shuts a man's door against God is *self-confidence*. If a man feels that he can “go the warfare at his own charges,” he does not need God, and God can but leave him alone to learn the lesson of his own *self-impotence*. The assurance on which the dependent man may rest is this: “To that man will I look, and with him will I dwell, who is humble, and contrite of heart, and trembleth at my word.” If we but win and maintain this right attitude, then we may have perfect confidence that God is with us, although the confidence may be more a matter of *faith* than of *feeling*. God was really with David, though the sensible sign of his presence did not come until, when the wind was still, there was that suggestive “sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.”

II. THE DIVINE PRESENCE MAY BE RECOGNIZED ONLY IN RESULTS. It sometimes seems right to God to make us go quite through our working-time only holding the *faith* of his presence and help, and not in any way aided by sensible signs. But such

faith is a practical inspiration and strength. It is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Sometimes the issues and results plainly show that God was with us; and the final issues of life will have this for the conviction they seal: "It was a good way wherein the *Lord our God led us.*"

III. THE DIVINE PRESENCE MAY BE RECOGNIZED IN CONSCIOUS STRENGTH FOR DUTY. This truth is effectively illustrated in St. Paul (2 Cor. xii. 7—9). He was taught to see God with him just in this, that "strength was made perfect in his weakness." In view of the practical character of our life, it is a more important thing to have strength for doing than, without strength, mere comfort of feeling. And yet men yearn most for sensible signs, and undervalue the inward strengthenings.

IV. THE DIVINE PRESENCE MAY BE INDICATED BY GRACIOUS SIGNS. As in the case of our Lord at his baptism and at his transfiguration. Also in his great agony in Gethsemane, there appeared an "angel from heaven, strengthening him." On several occasions of St. Paul's life he was favoured with special visions. With the pious servant of God we may say, "The best of all is that God is with us;" but we may also ask for the comforting sense of that presence through the aid of gracious signs. And God will grant these, both for our own sakes and for the sake of others who may be blessed through us. While watchful against extravagance and superstition, we ought not to deny the truth of visions and signs and Divine communications granted nowadays to God's people. There might well be a fuller expectancy of direct dealings with dependent and prayerful men, manifest Divine leading by inward impulse, and providential direction, and signs plain enough to sensitive souls.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1.—The contents of this verse and the following verses up to the twenty-fifth have no parallel in the Book of Samuel, and excite suggestion respecting the different objects with which the compiler of Chronicles wrote, as compared with those of the author of the former work. They also direct fresh attention to the sources upon which they drew. The history of the preparations made for the reception of the ark, and for its safe and religious escort into the city, is now proceeded with. These preparations occupied the three months, or part of the three months, spoken of in ch. xiii. 14. The houses may have been both his own (ch. xiv. 1) and the buildings referred to in ch. xi. 8 and 2 Sam. v. 9. The old tent, or *tabernacle*, is repeatedly alluded to, as in ch. xvi. 39; 2 Chron. i. 3. It will be remembered that the tabernacle established by Joshua at Shiloh remained there till the time of Eli, and the ark within it (1 Sam. iii. 3). Afterwards we find it removed to Nob, for there David ate the shewbread (1 Sam. xxi. 6). From thence, very possibly after the savage slaughter of the priests by the order of Saul, it was removed, and we find it at Gibeon, according to the above references. Here at Gibeon was an altar and "high place," which, in the earlier time of Solomon, formed the chief religious centre. The wanderings of the ark already given from Shiloh, through Philistia to Beth-she-mesh, Kirjath-jearim, Perez-uzzah, now land

it in this tent in Jerusalem. It is no more sheltered in the tabernacle. But the tabernacle, as well as the ark, was ultimately brought to the new-built temple of Solomon (1 Kings viii. 4; ch. ix. 19; 2 Chron. i. 4).

Ver. 2.—This verse together with vers. 12—15 show that the severe lesson of the destruction of Uzzah had been laid to heart, and had made David supremely anxious to take better counsel of the Law. Uzzah, though possibly the son of a Levite, more probably of a Hivite (Josh. ix. 7, 17), was not a priest, nor is there any sufficient evidence that he was a Levite; and most distinct was the order of the Law (Numb. i. 51—53; iii. 29—32; iv. 15—20), that "when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up; and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." So the sons of Kohath are to come to bear the sanctuary with all its sacred vessels, "but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die." Many things were allowed to be carried on waggons under the charge of the Gershonites and Merarites, but the strict contents of the sanctuary were to be borne in a specified manner by the Kohathites.

Ver. 3.—All Israel; i.e. as before, representatives of all Israel. So ver. 25 decides: "The elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord."

Vers. 4—11.—This classification of the children of Aaron, as the special priests,

and of the Levites, is constantly observed (ch. xii. 26, 27; xxvii. 17). The mention of the six representative Levitical families follows. That of Kohath (ver. 5) takes the lead, because, though second in order of birth (Gen. xlvi. 11; Exod. vi. 16-19; ch. vi. 1-30), its priestly importance gave it always first rank. To the same head belonged also three of the remaining five families, viz. Hebron (ver. 9) and Uzziel (ver. 10), who were brothers, as being both sons of Kohath (Exod. vi. 18); and Elizaphan, who, though son of Uzziel (Exod. vi. 22), had come to represent a distinct family (Numb. iii. 30). The other two required to complete the six are Asaiah (ver. 6) of the house of Merari, and Joel (ver. 7) of the house of Gershom. The representatives, then, of these six families, with the company of the brethren belonging to each of them, and the two priests Zadok and Abiathar (ver. 11), are now summoned into the presence of David, to receive a short but special charge.

Ver. 12.—Sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren. Nothing of the appointed observances of the Law are to be omitted this time, as in the haste and want of premeditation of the former occasion (Exod. xix. 22; xxviii. 41; xl. 13; Lev. viii. 12; xx. 7; xxi. 8; 2 Chron. v. 11; xxix. 15). These "sanctifying" consisted of different observances, according to the person and the occasion, but largely of ablutions of the body, washing of the clothes, and keeping separate from all natural and ceremonial causes of uncleanness in ordinary cases of Levitical service. That ye may bring up the ark. The word here employed for "bring" is not the same with the "carry" of vers 1 and 2. But the following verses (13-15) seem to intimate that, whatever the exact reason for which Uzziah had been peremptorily cut off, the Levites had also been to blame in not sanctifying themselves to carry the ark by its staves in the way originally appointed.

Ver. 13.—This verse purports to say that the Levites had been deficient in their duty in the double sense of not having themselves exclusively undertaken the removal of the ark, and not having executed that removal after the due order.

Ver. 15.—(So see Exod. xxv. 13-15; Numb. iv. 15; vii. 9.) It is plain that from the first stress was laid upon the rings and the staves through them by which the ark was to be carried, as also the "table of shittim wood" (Exod. xxv. 26-28) and the "altar" (Exod. xxvii. 4-7) and the "altar of incense" (Exod. xxx. 4, 5). However, these rings and staves were not found in the permanent furniture of the temple, except only for the ark.

Ver. 16, 17.—To appoint their brethren to

be the singers. This was the first step towards what we have already read in ch. vi. 31-39, 44; ix. 33, 34 (where see notes).

Ver. 18.—Ben. This word is either altogether an accidental interpolation, or a remnant of some statement of the patronymic character regarding Zechariah. Another indication of the state of the text in this verse is to be found in the probable omission of the name *Azaziah* of ver. 21, after *Jeiel*. It will be observed that no trace of this word *Ben* is found in the repeated list of ver. 20.

Vers. 19-21.—The psalteries on *Alamoth* (ver. 20), and harps on the *Sheminith* to excel (ver. 21), are descriptions the exact significance of which is not yet satisfactorily ascertained. Yet their connection in a series of four divisions of musical duty does throw some light upon them. These four verses manifestly purport to describe a special part to be performed by those of whom they respectively speak. Gesenius explains *psalteries on Alamoth* to mean such instruments as savoured of virgin tone or pitch, i.e. high as compared with the lower pitch of men's voices. This lower pitch he considers intimated by the word "*Sheminith*," literally, *the eighth*, or *octave*. The added expression, "to excel," need scarcely be, with him, understood to mean "to take the lead musically," but may be read generally to mark their surpassing quality.

Ver. 22.—For song. There is considerable diversity of opinion as to the meaning of this word. Some think its meaning to be "in the carrying" (שְׁמֹעַת) i.e. of the ark. Its exact position here seems not unfavourable to such interpretation. On the other hand, its position in ver. 27 seems conclusively to point to the translation of the Septuagint and of our Authorized Version in this place as the correct one. Dr. Murphy, however, to escape this, thinks "with the singers" in ver. 27 to be a "copyist's inadvertent repetition."

Ver. 23.—Berechiah and Elkanah. It appears from the following verse that there was also another couple of doorkeepers (i.e. persons to protect the openings of the ark, that it should not be opened), viz. *Obed-edom* and *Jehiah*.

Ver. 24.—Between these couples probably went the seven priests blowing the trumpets (Numb. x. 1-9). These trumpets were of solid silver, of one piece, were straight and narrow, and had an expanded mouth. They are found on the arch of Titus, and are described by Josephus. On the other hand, the trumpet, more correctly rendered "cornet" (רִנָּה, as distinguished from our *שׁוֹרֶן*), which was used for proclaiming the jubilee, for announcing the new year

for sentinel and other special signals, and for war, was shaped like a ram's horn, and probably made of the same. The particular appropriateness of the use of the former on this occasion is manifest, in addition to the fact that they were the appointed trumpets for the journeying of the camp and *a fortiori* of the ark itself at a time so essentially religious as the present. Yet, as we learn from ver. 28, the latter were used as well, and *cymbals*, *psalteries*, and *harps*. The original number of the silver trumpets was two only, and they were to be sounded strictly by the anointed priests, sons of Aaron, at all events when their employment was within the sanctuary. Their employment, however, grew far more general, and we find (2 Chron. v. 12) that their number had risen to a hundred and twenty (so too 2 Chron. xiii. 12; Neh. xii. 35). For Obed-edom, the doorkeeper, see ch. xvi. 38; and therewith note on ch. xiii. 14.

Ver. 26.—This verse with the following four are paralleled by 2 Sam. vi. 12-16. The contents of this verse in particular reveal the intense anxiety and the trembling fear and awe with which the sacred burden was now again lifted. A world of meaning and of feeling for all those present at least underlay the expression, When God helped the Levites that bare the ark (comp. 1 Sam. vi. 14, 15; 2 Sam. vi. 13, 18). The offering of seven bullocks and seven rams is thought by some to be additional to David's offering, when he had gone "six paces" (2 Sam. vi. 13). Much more probably, however, the "six paces" meant, not six footsteps, but six lengths that would make some distance.

Ver. 27.—Several things in this verse indicate a somewhat uncertain and unsteady selection of particulars by the compiler from his original sources. The natural reading of the verse would seem to say that David and all those Levites who bore the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah, all wore the robe of byssus, while David had, in addition, the ephod of linen. Yet it is unlikely that all did wear the robe. Again, the Hebrew text exhibits no preposition before the singers, on the second occasion of the occurrence of the expression in this verse. Yet little sense can be found without a preposition. The robe was not distinctively

a priest's garment (1 Sam. xviii. 4; xxiv. 5, 12; 2 Sam. xiii. 8; Job i. 20; ii. 12), though priests did wear it. The robe of byssus is spoken of only here; 2 Chron. v. 12; and Esth. viii. 15. *Byssus*, however, is spoken of as material for other purposes in ch. iv 21; 2 Chron. ii. 14; iii. 14; Esth. i. 6; Ezek. xxvii. 16. The *ephod*, on the other hand, was no doubt distinctively a high priest's garment (Exod. xxviii. 4-12), though we read of Samuel wearing one (1 Sam. ii. 18, 28), and of David doing the same, as on this occasion. The fine linen (*psa*), in the first clause of this verse, is not the same with that (*psa*) in the last clause. The first clause of this verse (which makes the last clause somewhat redundant) bears some resemblance in letters to the fourteenth verse of 2 Chron. vi. first clause, which means, "and David danced with all his might," and the two clauses exactly answer to one another in position—another suggestion of an uncertain text here.

Ver. 28.—*Making a noise.* This description qualifies the cymbals alone, and should rather appear in our translation as "noise-making cymbals."

Ver. 29.—Thus briefly is given by our compiler what occupies five verses (2 Sam. vi. 19, 20-23) in the Book of Samuel. Neither of the words here rendered dancing and playing (but which would be better rendered "leaping and dancing") is the same with those employed in 2 Sam. vi. 14, 16, where our Authorized Version rendering is "dancing" and "leaping and dancing" respectively. The word in both of those verses that represents the dancing, does correctly so represent, but is a somewhat generic form, as it carries the idea of dancing in a circle. The reason of Michal "despising David in her heart" can only be found in the unreason and the irreligion of that heart itself. She was a type of not a few, who despise devotion, enthusiasm, and above all practical liberality and generosity, on the part of any individual of their own family, when these are shown to Christ and his Church, and when they think they may be a trifle the poorer for it, or when they feel that the liberality and devotion of another exposes their own "poverty" in both these respects.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1-29.—A chapter of practical repentance. There are few happier, and perhaps no better, chapters in any one's life than the chapter of practical repentance. To have to sorrow over the past and to undo it is, no doubt, the incident of a fallen nature and of a frail, imperfect life. When once, however, the necessity has arisen, then to sorrow no barren sorrow, but to add to it reparation, alteration, amendment, is at one and the

same time to fling a just, manly defiance at the merciless spirit of remorse and to pay the merited homage to goodness and to God. The life of many a good man owns to many a sin, many a folly, and, when he goes not so far as these, to many a great and to-be-regretted mistake. But the most marked differences between the good man and the bad are then to be seen. This goes from bad to worse, and the tangled victim ere very long becomes the mournful and miserable sacrifice. That goes from bad with tear, with striving, with prayer, toward the lost or awhile eclipsed good. The very mark of the man made divinely wise is discerned in the repentance wherewith he repents, the promptness of the sorrow and the fear inspired, the deliberateness and the thoroughness of the amendment made or attempted. This chapter gives the history of such a repentance and of its happy consequences. Notice—

I. THE EXCEEDING FEAR AND INTENSE GRIEF OF FIRST MOMENTS OF FAILURE AND PUNISHMENT HAD NOT BEEN SUFFERED TO OVERWHELM AND TO PROSTRATE MIND AND ENERGY. Given a little time to recover nature's tone—some three months had by this time passed—and something better than nature did also return. A willing thoughtfulness supervened; deep searchings of the heart, of the written Word, and of what had been actually done had their way; and convictions just and right and wholesome were formed. There is always one great model exhibited in Scripture of repentance. To Saul's exceeding fear and intense and sudden visitation there needed some interval for recovery, and such interval was granted. Even where it may be possible, it is not advisable to *act*, when under the influence of the extremes of feeling, when the storm of mental emotion is at its height. But it is infinitely hazardous to neglect the right time of action; and, so soon as the first intensity of feeling is passed, how many have waited prostrate till all disposition to rouse to altered and improved action has also passed!

II. FRANK, OPEN, AND EVEN PUBLIC CONFESSION OF THE ERROR THAT HAD BEEN. David now lays down the Law (vers. 2, 13) in the very act of confession of that Law broken. He lays down the Law, but not out of his own lip—by distinct and emphatic quotation of itself. He now saw and read the Law exact, and he saw how far distant the conduct for which he was in an eminent degree responsible, and of which he had literally been part, had strayed from the letter and spirit of that exact Law. This is in fact what still in deepest sense, and in the deepest hidings of our spiritual nature, produces conviction of the most spiritual kind—conviction of sin. When the eye of the conscience can be gained for a moment to see this sight, and to notice the wide difference between a holy perfect Law and the actual life, which should lie under its governance but does not so, the Spirit of God has gained this end—our conviction.

III. A CONFESSION THAT DOES NOT SHELVE THE BLAME UPON OTHERS, BUT ACCEPTS ITS OWN FULL SHARE. David quotes the Law that concerns the occasion (ver. 2). He exhorts “the chief of the fathers of the Levites” to sanctify themselves and prepare in all respects according to the Law for the great and holy work now before them (ver. 12). He also does not shrink from addressing these pointedly, as those who were officially and in their own persons to blame. But he does not finish his remonstrating and warning sentence without distinctly including himself among those in fault, and superseding “*ye*” by “*we*” (ver. 13). There was never any bare verbal confession of sin more open than that of Adam, but there was never any confession more worthless, for he wished to lay all the essence of the sin on Eve. The same may be said of Eve, as regards her tempter, the serpent. That kind of confession of sin is nothing worth. It has no semblance of meritoriousness in it. No sacred virtue inheres in it. A double depth of the heart's hardness, a double sluggishness of conscience, sleep, a double self-deception is there. Short of this, however, there are not a few, whose it is to exhort and warn others, who will largely forget in spirit, even when not in letter, to include themselves in needful reproof and in united confession. Yet how often is the leader of the flock doubly answerable, in reality doubly blamable, and in deep truth tenfold called upon to make bumblest and most penitent confession!

IV. A REMARKABLE AND SINCERE READINESS ON THE PART OF ALL TO REPAIR WHAT HAD BEEN AMISS. If we often think too well of ourselves individually, and sometimes speak too forgetfully of the inherent disease of human nature, yet we are frequently disposed to underrate the effect of the word that is spoken in the Name of the Lord, of the faithful appeal that is pointed plainly but lovingly to the consciences of those who have been in error, and of the influence of our own repenting and confessing example. Put

three such incentives as these together, and they will rarely fail to find their converts of some amongst a number. Moreover, great as is the contagion of evil, as seen when the multitude will flock together to do evil, yet, on the other hand, correspondingly great is the attraction of goodness. The multitude of those who worship, the multitude of those who keep the holy day, the multitude of those who join to work in and for the Lord's temple, literal or spiritual,—all these are facts as patent, bearing witness to the affection that will subsist to the highest ends, within a multitude bent on good, as other facts bear patent witness to the contagion that works in a multitude to do evil. The happier aspect of the multitude is here before us. The shepherd-king is shepherding rightly, with truth to the Law, with careful warning for all as regards the past, with a faithful rebuke of others, and loving confession of his own—and the whole people concerned are as one man. They are of one heart, of one mind, and they proceed to be of one deed.

V. A SIMILAR READINESS ALSO ON THE PART OF ALL TO ACCEPT THE EXACT PLACE AND DUTY FOR WHICH THEY WERE RESPECTIVELY MOST FITTED. This feature of the occasion is shadowed forth in all the careful and nice order of the proceedings from beginning to end. But it is more than shadowed forth in the distinct emphasis of allusions, such as those of vers. 16, 17, 22, 24, which point to the hierarchy, so to say, of office, of gift, of grace. The Church of God as it is in perpetual quest of the brotherhood of humanity, so is it, *pari passu*, perpetually contributing to reproduce the order, the very *cosmos* of the world. One of the grandest evidences of the presence of the living Spirit of God in any portion of the Church is the visible presence of order. St. Paul loved to lay stress upon this: "Let all things be *done* decently and in order;" "Peace . . . as in all Churches of the saints." That Church of living, modern times, that may first and best find all its members awake, all ready for work, each falling into his assigned place without pride or without envy, without murmur or without assumption, will first and best prove the Divine presence and glory, and challenge a usefulness and "praise in the earth" for Zion, hitherto unknown except by scantiest earnest. There are those who are born teachers and leaders in the Church of Christ, and that Church provides the scene of very various "skill." It is, perhaps, because, some or other forms of "skill" are wrongly disbelieved, sceptically distrusted, or even disclaimed in some quarters in modern days, that our presentations of the Church often seem to lack loveliness, to fail in finding sphere for the gift of all and each, and what should be the most attractive possible form of human society is shorn of any native grace. The light and fulness and the grace and joy of God's Spirit can never be *adequately* entertained in any human organization, but, on that very account, much less may we circumscribe them within any artificial lines of our own, making for commandments of the wealthy and beauty-loving God the traditions of hard and poverty-stricken men.

VI. MOST GRATEFUL OMENS OF THE DIVINE SATISFACTION, APPROVAL, BLESSING. It is certain that God has never been slow to acknowledge the service that has been humbly and faithfully done to him. And it is most noticeable that, after his severest and largest chastisements, swift he will come again to receive and to welcome those who have learnt to set their face again to him. How glad was Noah, when he came forth from the ark to set foot upon a deluged desolate world, to find how the smoke of his sacrifice ascended, acceptable to God, and so accepted by him, that the "Lord smelled a sweet savour, and *said in his heart*," as we are told, but evidently said elsewhere as well, the words of a reassuring gracious promise, on which the world's life has ever since and safely hung! Of God it may well be said, "He smites to heal." And so now, when all is done reverently and in order, and the whole scene is sacred with obedience and with practical repentance, God's "help" was given, and it was felt such a comfort, such an encouragement, such a present performed blessing, that anon the whole procession halts to offer "sacrifices of joy," and to "sing, yea, sing praises to the Lord." It is observable that we are not told how the Lord "helped the Levites that bare the ark," or in what signs and indications they recognized his helping presence. It may have been that as they feared to lift, lest another fatal stroke of the invisible mighty hand should descend, no such stroke fell, and the departing of fear was equivalent to a very inrushing of joy and confidence. Their hands were stronger, their feet walked more steadily, their shoulders rejoiced in their hallowed burden. They didn't *stumble*. The inner peace and confidence that God's true and faithful children and servants know,

even early after they have needed the severest chastening, pervade a quickened and sensitive state of mind, so as to produce convictions, experience, language, unintelligible to the world, surpassing all its power to give, outliving all its power to take away.

VII. THE OUTCOME OF TRUEST REPENTANCE, THE PUREST SERVICE OF GOD, THE DAY OF HOLIEST DELIGHT AND WORSHIP, WILL OFTEN ENOUGH FIND SOME FORM OF THE WORLD READY TO FLOUT IT. The well-known form on this occasion needs not to be dwelt upon. But two things under it are well worthy of note and remembrance. 1. That in the experience of that mortifying irritation or keen grief, as the case may be, an honest retrospect will often show that we are wounded by the thorn we once put to our own side. Moreover, the thorn to our spirit often originates with the flesh and the lust of the flesh—what we once hailed as gratification to sense, and never thought of pursuing its probable or its possible working any deeper or further! 2. And that in the many instances in which this is not so, we are but again sharers with the apostle, and reminded of our need of an humiliating lesson of the flesh, lest we “be exalted above measure” by the blessed, the transporting “revelation of the Spirit.”

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*A place for the ark.* The ancient tabernacle remained at Gibeon, and was there at the accession of Solomon. But the ark was brought up to Jerusalem. It was natural and right that David, having made a capital for his kingdom, should wish the city his own right hand had won to be the metropolis of Israel, not only politically, but also religiously. Until the temple was built there were two centres of religion—the tabernacle at Gibeon and the ark in its tent in the city of David. The king was not satisfied to have a stately and luxurious abode for himself; he wished that the ark of God should be suitably housed. Hence he caused to be prepared for the reception of this sacred object an appropriate and magnificent tabernacle.

I. THIS WAS A SIGN OF CONCERN AND REVERENCE FOR RELIGION. The ark was associated with the memorable history of Israel, and especially with the giving of the Law. It was cherished and honoured by the nation generally. We know the religious beliefs of David too well to suspect him of superstition in his regard for the ark of the covenant. He was well aware of the insufficiency of all things external, and of the necessity of inward, spiritual religion. But he thought it right to treat everything especially connected with religion with a decent respect. It is easy to detect superstition in the manner in which many persons treat religious persons and things; but it is too possible and too frequent to commit a mistake of the opposite kind, and to treat them with studied neglect and contempt.

II. IT WAS A SIGN OF DEVOUT HONOUR FOR GOD HIMSELF. In honouring the ark, David was honouring the God by whose command the ark had been originally constructed, and whose Law it was intended by God to contain and preserve. Similarly, in honouring God’s Word, God’s day, God’s Churches, God’s ministers, we may be honouring God himself “Them that honour me,” saith he, “I will honour.”

III. DAVID’S CONDUCT EVINCED A CONCERN FOR THE RELIGIOUS WELFARE OF HIS SUBJECTS. He had the ark brought to Jerusalem because Jerusalem was becoming the capital of the country, the centre of government, the meeting-place of multitudes, and the home of many of the influential and educated. And the presence of the ark was adapted to remind the population of the city of the presence of Jehovah, and of the claims of his Law upon their hearts. David showed by this act that he desired to recognize the supremacy of righteousness; that he designed his government to be in accordance with the revelations and dictates of the King of kings.

IV. DAVID’S CONDUCT IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE DUTY OF MAKING EFFORT AND SACRIFICE FOR THE CAUSE OF RELIGION. A careless and self-indulgent king would have said in his heart, “Let the ark stay where it is; any place is good enough to accommodate a religious symbol; and the less religion is brought before the people, the better for themselves and for me.” Not so David. He was willing to take thought, to prepare plans, to expend money, to employ artificers, in order to do honour to the ark of the Most High. Let us not deem it a hardship, but an honour, to do anything for the advancement of religion and for the glory of God.—T.

Ver. 12.—“*Sanctify yourselves.*” Taught by experience, David now employed in the service of the sanctuary, to minister in connection with the ark, those whom the Lord himself had set apart for this office; he committed the business of bringing up the ark to the chief of the fathers of the Levites. But it was not enough that the right persons should be employed; it was important that the right persons should do their work in a right way. The Levites were, accordingly, required to sanctify themselves. We know from the Law that ceremonial purity was incumbent upon those who were discharging sacred functions. We are reminded by this language that—

I. GOD IS A HOLY GOD. Not only did Jehovah reveal himself as being holy in words, but also in the laws he imposed and the regulations he prescribed. The Jewish economy was largely designed to impress upon the minds of the Israelites the holy, faultless, perfect character of God. And this lesson has been taught even more effectively to us in the character, life, and mediation of God’s “holy child Jesus.”

II. A HOLY GOD REQUIRES HOLY SERVANTS. The priests and Levites were enjoined to observe strict regulations as to their ceremonial purity, especially when about to engage in the public service of the God of Israel. Holy works demand clean hands, and clean hands need pure hearts. The ceremonial cleanliness of the Levitical Law was the emblem of spiritual purity. How holy should they be who “bear the vessels of the Lord”!

III. HOLY SERVICE IS PROMPTED BY THE GRACIOUS INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Regeneration and sanctification are the especial work of the Holy Ghost. His cleansing influences are symbolized by the waters of baptism. God’s servants all need the “washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” There is appropriateness in the direction, “*Sanctify yourselves;*” for the means of grace are within the reach of Christians, who may obtain the gift of the Spirit by asking that gift from a merciful and liberal Father in heaven.—T.

Ver. 13.—“*Due order.*” David explained the failure of the former attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem, by a reference to the neglect by himself and his people of the regulations divinely prescribed and applicable to such a case. In directing the Levites to prepare for their proper service, he acknowledged that, when he had before purposed to bring up the ark to its resting-place, he had acted thoughtlessly and profanely, and had suffered in consequence. This lesson is inculcated by the text—*God’s order is the due order.*

I. RELIGION DOES NOT CONSIST IN FORM. Even under the elder dispensation, in which forms and ceremonies were prescribed in abundance, true religion did not consist in such things. The psalmists and the prophets rose altogether above a merely sacrificial and ceremonial religion. And under the new covenant, the letter, the form, sink into insignificance, compared with the spiritual reality they are designed to express and to promote. “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*” We, as Christians, serve him, not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit.

II. YET THE MANIFESTATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE AND SERVICE ARE NOT LAWLESS AND DISORDERLY. It would be a bad thing to substitute the form for the reality; but it does not follow that it is a good thing to have no form at all. It is the direction of an inspired apostle: “*Let all things be done decently and in order.*” Our worship should be seemly and reverent; our work should be organized and systematic; our liberality should be upon principle.

III. PRESCRIPTIONS AS TO ORDER SHOULD BE CAREFULLY OBSERVED AND OBEYED. If, for instance, it is found that the New Testament lays down certain principles of Church government, prescribes certain ordinances or ministries, spiritual Christianity expects that these will be reverently considered and observed. Obedience is required as homage to the authority of the Lawgiver and Lord. We have no right to set our fancies and preferences above Divine laws.

IV. OBSERVANCE OF ORDER BECOMES CONGENIAL AND EASY WHEN INSPIRED BY GRATEFUL LOVE. To a child of God, a friend of Christ, there is nothing harsh or repugnant in compliance with Divine regulations in attention to “*due order.*”—T.

Ver. 1.—*How little and how much we may do for God.* There is something in this verse which, at first reading, painfully suggests the smallness of the effort made by

David in the cause of God as compared with those which he made for his own convenience; he "made him *houses*"—solid buildings more than one, for himself; he prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it *a tent*—one frail tabernacle for Jehovah. Doubtless, under examination, all damaging reflection on the royal conduct will disappear. David was probably justified in doing as much for himself; he was certainly justified in doing no more, at that time, for the manifested presence of God. But the fact of his building houses for himself and one tent for the Lord may well suggest to us—

I. **HOW LITTLE, COMPARATIVELY, WE DO FOR GOD.** There are those who complain, freely and sadly enough, that there are "so many claims" on their liberality. But it would do us all good to estimate how small and trifling a proportion of all we have to spend we devote directly to God and to his cause. It may seem large, sometimes, when we look at it by itself; but when compared with all we have to give—all at our command—it seems small and poor indeed. Let us reckon up and put down the proportion we give to Christ, consciously and directly, of (1) the hours of all our *time*; (2) the *thoughts* of all our care and reflection; (3) the strength of all our *energy*; (4) the money of all our funds;—and we shall, in most cases, find that it is the bulk we reserve for ourselves, and only the "small dust of the balance" that we dedicate to God. We build ourselves *houses* and pitch *a tent* for the Lord. On the other hand, we may consider—

II. **HOW MUCH, IN FACT AND TRUTH, WE MAY DO FOR HIM.** For that which we give directly to Christ should be but a very small part of all that we present to him. We should lay at his feet everything we have and are. 1. We dedicate *ourselves* and lives to him when, by a sacred and living faith, we accept him for our Saviour. 2. We endeavour to *live, at every conscious moment*, under his observant eye; regulating all our thoughts, controlling all our feelings, ordering all our words, choosing all our courses, executing all our work, according to his will, and in the hope of giving him pleasure. 3. We hold ourselves *ready to lay down our life* and surrender all our dearest treasures at his Divine bidding.—C.

Vera. 2—15.—Three valuable virtues: rectification, admonition, obedience. We have—

I. **A ROYAL RECTIFICATION.** We have the useful fiction in England that "the king can do no wrong." It has been too often assumed by the potentates of the earth that they could not be mistaken, and need not return on their way. David was not so foolish and so faulty. He had the sense to see that he had erred in the way in which he had carried out a good desire, and he was prepared openly and honourably to retrace his steps. So he said to his courtiers, "No one ought to carry the ark of God," etc. (ver. 2), with obvious reference to the transaction recorded in ch. xiii. And he "gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem," and "assembling the children of Aaron and the Levites" (ver. 4), he spoke plainly of the departure from the Law of which he and others had been guilty (vers. 12, 13). We certainly need not be ashamed "to come after the king" in the way of retraction. Where a monarch leads the way we may be content to follow. There is no more certain indication of foolish and fatal obstinacy than the refusal to admit an error. They who cling to their own mistakes and pertinaciously justify them are sure to come to some great grief in time. But they who have the humility and penetration to see that they are wrong, and also the courage to avow and correct it, are sure to find themselves on the upward road. They may take a wrong turn or two, but they move in the right direction, and, like David and the ark, will reach Jerusalem in time.

II. **A GRACIOUS ADMONITION.** (Vera. 11—13.) There may have been some doubt as to where the blame really lay, whether on the king or on the priests, or (as was probable enough) on both. David, while he did not exonerate himself, evidently felt that the priests and Levites were included in the condemnation: indeed, he addresses them and admonishes them as delinquents: "Because ye did it not at the first," etc. (ver. 13). His words and their attitude together may suggest to us that admonition should be graciously given and as graciously received. We should, on such occasions as this, speak as those (1) who convey their message with reluctance and only on constraint; (2) who desire to spare feeling as much as faithfulness will allow; (3) who know that

they have themselves reason to desire all possible clemency to be shown; (4) who must not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. And on such occasions we should, when ourselves admonished, receive the admonition as those (1) who are likely enough to have erred; (2) who are prepared to be reproved by those who are in any position of authority; (3) who are ready to correct our mistake at the earliest opportunity.

III. A PROMPT OBEDIENCE. (Vers. 14, 15.) There seems to have been no hesitancy, on the part of the priests and Levites; they appear to have applied themselves at once, with due zest, to the work which they had neglected before. They sanctified themselves for it (ver. 14), and then they executed it (ver. 15), doing all things “as Moses commanded, according to the word of the Lord.” Like them, and like the prodigal of the parable (Luke xv.), who said, “I will arise,” and he arose, we should feel and do, conclude and act, with no interval between of which the enemy can make use. When we have taken due time for understanding, and have seen the way we should take, then we should, like the men of whom we read here, (1) at once make needful preparations for action, and, (2) these made, carry our conclusions into effect. It is an evil spirit of uncertainty and delay which often makes penitence to be unavailing; it is prompt, unhesitating obedience to the Word of the Lord which takes us to the post of duty and then to the seat of honour and of joy.—C.

Vers. 16, 25, 26, 28.—*Sacred joy.* In the bringing up of the ark from the house of Obed-edom, the prevailing note is that of sacred joy. We learn—

I. THAT HOLY OBEDIENCE IS ATTENDED WITH SACRED JOY. The act was one of obedience in two ways. It was so *in spirit*; for though not commanded to take this particular step, the Israelites were desired by God to show all possible honour to that with which his service was connected. In removing the ark, therefore, to the capital, David was acting conformably to the will of God. It was also obedient *in form*. This time the error in the mode of conveying the sacred chest was avoided, and the Word of the Lord strictly consulted. And the result was a large measure of sacred joy. Gladness of heart filled the souls of king, priests, Levites, people. Everything was done, from beginning to end, “with joy” (vers. 16, 25). Holy obedience will always have the same effect upon the heart. If we serve the Lord with our whole heart, endeavouring to do his will, both in spirit and in form, we shall have “gladness in our heart more than in the time when their corn and their wine increase.”

II. THAT SACRED JOY UTTERS ITSELF WELL IN SACRED PSALMODY. “David spake . . . to appoint . . . the singers with instruments of music,” etc. (ver. 16). Sacred song often gives utterance to sorrow and distress, and there are plaintive strains, vocal and instrumental, which are profoundly expressive and touching. But gladness and song seem to be best associated. “Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (Jas. v. 13). When our heart is glad in the Lord, we cannot do better than join in “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our heart to the Lord” (Eph. v. 19).

III. THAT SACRED JOY IS SUITABLY ACCOMPANIED WITH SACRIFICE. (Ver. 26.) The ceremony would not have been complete without sacrifice. This was probably a burnt offering or thank offering; it was, at any rate, an offering taken from their “flocks and herds” unto the Lord, and may suggest to us that now, when God will not take such sacrifices at our hands, we should, in the time of our gladness, present such sacrifices as those with which he is well pleased. We can “do good and communicate” (Heb. xiii. 16). Of our fulness we can contribute to the need of those who lack. Or from our exchequer we can take that which will help to fill the treasury of the Lord,

IV. THAT SACRED JOY SHOULD PROVE TO BE A DIFFUSIVE THING. David wished to extend this rejoicing to all who would enter into it; he made it as public as possible; so general was it that we read that “all Israel brought up the ark . . . with shouting,” etc. (ver. 28; see 2 Sam. vi. 19). We may keep our griefs much to ourselves, not inflicting them on others, much less parading them before others; but we should strive to make our friends and neighbours the sharers of our joy. This is true of all gladness of heart, but it is peculiarly applicable to sacred joy. When our souls are glad in him, our Father and Saviour, we should seek to make all whom we can reach and influence partakers of “like precious faith” and hope and joy. Of the joy that is not diffusive we may be suspicious. The joy that is Divine, that comes from God,

and that is in God, will be after his own nature, bountiful, generous, communicative.—C.

Vers. 16—29 (vers. 16, 25, 26, 28, see preceding homily).—*The service of the Lord.* This passage is instructive, as conveying some valuable lessons, universally and abidingly applicable, respecting our service of the Supreme. We learn—

I. THAT WE SHOULD CHEERFULLY RENDER SUCH SERVICE AS WE ARE FITTED TO BRING. In this ceremony the services rendered were manifold. Some (the chief of the Levites) had the work of selection and appointment (vers. 16, 17); some took the part of playing with cymbals (ver. 19); others with psalteries (ver. 20); others with harps (ver. 21); others “did blow with the trumpets” (ver. 24); others acted as door-keepers or custodians of the ark (vers. 23, 24); yet others ministered in sacred song (vers. 22, 27). David himself danced and played before the Lord (ver. 29; 2 Sam. vi. 14). As “all our springs are in God”—all the sources of our strength and joy—so all our faculties may be devoted to his service; “as well the singers as the players on instruments” are to be engaged in worshipping him (see Ps. lxxxvii. 7). We have very varied talents, both in kind and in degree; the only thing to be careful about is that we do not hide any of them in the earth, but put them all out in the service of Christ. Nothing can be less worthy of a Christian man than to disregard the contribution of a neighbour because it is other or smaller than our own; nothing can be more needless than to be distressed because of the larger or loftier contribution than our own: let each bring to the Lord of love and righteousness that which he entrusted to his charge, and he shall “in no wise lose his reward.”

II. THAT WE SHOULD ALL MAKE FITTING PREPARATION FOR THE SERVICE WE ARE ABOUT TO RENDER. The king who was careful to be dressed in a way that made him most equal to his combat with the giant (1 Sam. xvii.), now sees to it that he is suitably attired for the work before him; the others who took part in the procession were similarly careful. When we address ourselves to work for our Divine Master, we should see that we are suitably equipped. We may look for help from God (as we shall see presently), but we must not presumptuously neglect the conditions of success. We are to be armed for our effort with all appropriate weapons; we are to be clothed, not only with humility, but with knowledge, zeal, devotion, perseverance.

III. THAT WE MAY RECKON ON DIVINE HELP IF WE ARE DOING THE WORK TO WHICH HE CALLS US. “God helped the Levites that bare the ark” (ver. 26). There was nothing in the act in which they were engaged that was peculiarly trying to their strength; nevertheless they received help from Omnipotence to do their work. In God is the source of all our strength; there is nothing we can do purely “of ourselves;” all our sufficiency is of him. And if the Levites needed Divine help in bearing the burden which they carried, how much more do we need it! and with what frequency and earnestness should we seek it, when we bear those burdens for him which require, not some slight muscular exertion, but much mental, moral, and spiritual excellency!

IV. THAT WE MUST NOT BE DETAINED FROM THE SERVICE OF GOD BY THE PERVERSITY OF THE IRRELIGIOUS. Michal despised David for his godly zeal (ver. 29). She lacked the devotedness of heart which her husband possessed, and therefore she misjudged his action. Ungodliness cannot understand, cannot appreciate religious earnestness; it therefore disregards, and even despises it. We are not to be moved by this consideration. David would not have omitted his service had he known beforehand the reception which awaited him at the royal palace. We are not to be detained from the active, enthusiastic service of our Lord and of our perishing brethren because we are well aware that there will be those who, looking out from the window of their own impiety or indifference, will regard us with cynical contempt. All of this will weigh but as the small dust of the balance against the gratitude of those we serve, and the “well done” of the approving Lord.—C.

Vers. 1—15.—*The bearers of the ark.* In the account (2 Sam. vi. 11—23) of the bringing of the ark into Jerusalem, only the *principal* facts are recorded. In this chapter we are presented with the religious aspect of this solemn act and the preparation David made for it. The motive for bringing the ark to Jerusalem was (see 2 Sam. vi. 12) that David had heard of the great blessing the ark had brought upon the house

of Obed-edom during the time it had been there. David arranges that the ark should be borne only by Levites, for them only had the Lord chosen to carry it. By this arrangement it is expressly acknowledged that it was contrary to law to place it on a cart. The heads of the priests and Levites are summoned to take the matter in hand Kohath is first named, because Aaron was descended from Kohath, and because to the Kohathites, on account of this near relation to the priests, there belonged the duty of serving in that which was most holy, and in bearing the holiest vessels of the tabernacle. The transport of the ark was the Kohathites' *special* work. These priests and six of the Levites were commanded by David to consecrate themselves with their brethren to bring up the ark. This consecration consisted of the removing of all that was unclean, the washing of the body and clothes (Gen. xxxv. 2), the keeping aloof from every defilement, and from touching unclean things. David reminds them (ver. 13) that because God was not sought according to his Word, there came a breach. That Word required that the ark on which Jehovah was enthroned should be carried by Levites, and should be touched by no unholly person or one who was not a priest (see Numb. iv. 15). So the Levites, we are told, bare the ark on their shoulders with staves, according to the Word of the Lord. From this portion of our chapter let us learn three spiritual lessons. 1. It was because David heard of the blessing the ark had been to the house of Obed-edom that made him send for it. That ark was Christ. Wherever he is in a heart, a family, a Church, or a nation, there a blessing will be left. He *came* to bless (see Acts iii. 26); and none who receive him shall be without that blessing. But as in the case of Obed-edom those who receive his blessing are made the channel of blessing to others. They cannot be hid. David sends for the ark because Obed-edom had been so blessed by it. 2. Those Levites who bore the ark, though they had been from of old divinely appointed to this work, had *again* to be consecrated. No touch of uncleanness, or defilement of body or garment, must come near it. So must it be now with all those who have to do with Christ. To be *Christians* is not enough any more than it was to be Levites. They must be *clean* Christians. There must be plenty of "washing," plenty of "keeping aloof" from things, and plenty of careful walking with all those who have to do with him. "Be ye holy that bear the vessels of the Lord," "Be ye holy, for I am holy." 3. It might seem to human observation a very trifling difference between carrying the ark on a cart or carriage, and carrying it on the shoulders with staves. But the great point is—What was the Lord's word? It was *this* made the difference (ver. 15). So is it now in everything. It is not what *I* think or what *you* think or what any man thinks. It is, "What saith the Word of the Lord?" This is to settle *every* question. And he would not have been a true Levite any more than that man could be a true Christian who would for a moment hesitate to accept this decision as final.—W.

Vers. 16—24.—*The singers and musical instruments accompanying the ark.* David gave also a further charge to the Levites to appoint singers and musical instruments to accompany the ark. Three kinds of musical instruments are named (ver. 16): the psalter, an oblong box with broad bottom and a somewhat convex sounding-board, over which strings of wire are stretched; harps or lutes, and the cymbal or instrument provided with a small bell. These singers formed three choirs according to the instrument they played. Heman, Asaph, and Ethan played brazen cymbals; Benaiah and the seven who followed played psalteries; the last six played lutes. The former three had cymbals to direct the song; while the rest had partly psalteries, partly lutes, in order to play the accompaniment to the singing. Chenaniah was captain of the Levites who had charge of the bearing of the ark because he was instructed in what had to be observed with respect to it. The blowing of the silver trumpets by the priests rests on Numb. x. 1—10. The procession was in all probability arranged thus: the singers and players in front in three divisions; next Chenaniah, captain of the bearers; two doorkeepers; the priests with the trumpets; two doorkeepers; the king, with the elders and captains of thousands. Observe the spiritual lesson to be learned from this procession. The ark was to be accompanied by those who could sing and shout for joy (see vers. 16, 28). So is it with those who have to do with the true Ark—Christ. We have had first cleanliness, and now we have joy. These are inseparable. Not the Levite as such, but the Levite washed and clean,

shouting for joy. Not the Christian as such, but the Christian cleansed, and holy. Such only can truly be full of joy. It is joy from conscious union with Christ the true Ark, and maintained in holiness of life.—W.

Vers. 25—29.—*The clothing of the priests and Levites.* After the journey had been accomplished, the bearers and those who had brought up the ark offered thank offerings of seven bullocks and seven rams—perfect offering, denoted by the number seven. David and all the priests and Levites that accompanied the ark were clothed in white linen. The outer garments corresponded with the cleanliness, the holiness, and the joy. So the white-robed multitude are represented as singing with palms in their hands, indicating the holiness and the joy, round the true Ark, the Lord Jesus Christ, in heaven. No wonder Michal should despise David. The heart of every one not experimentally acquainted with the Lord Jesus will always do the same. “The natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God: . . . they are foolishness unto him.” The Michal-heart is everywhere around us. Oh the joy of knowing Jesus!—W.

Vers. 2, 12, 13.—*Learning the lessons of God's judgments.* We are not left in any doubt as to the national lesson intended to be taught by the Divine judgment on Uzza. David came to see that “none ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites” (comp. Numb. i. 50; iv. 15; vii. 9; x. 17). The judgment showed that God had not been “sought after the due order;” and of this error and neglect there is now the honest confession, with due care in the new effort, to meet fully the Divine conditions and requirements. “The ‘due order’ was that the ark should be borne on the shoulders of the Kohathite Levites—not that it should be placed upon a cart, drawn by oxen, and rudely shaken.” Out of his first mistaken attempt David learned the valuable, practical lesson that—

“Evil is wrought for want of thought,
As well as for want of heart.”

The incident suggests a general treatment of the teachings of God's judgments. Isaiah expresses the attitude, of which David here gives us the example, when he says (Isa. xxvi.), “In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee.”

I. JUDGMENT TAUGHT DAVID RESPECT FOR GOD'S LAW AND ORDER. It does not appear that the full ceremonial of Mosaism had been preserved during Saul's reign, and certainly there had been some neglect of the Scriptures; but it is especially to be observed that, in making a new tabernacle on Mount Zion, and fitting it up according to his own ideas, David was in great peril of wilfulness, and of neglecting to consult and to follow the Divine regulations. Such a judgment as that on Uzza was needed to thoroughly arouse him to the importance of a precise and minute obedience. So we too often say, “What does it matter, if the thing is done?” And we have, often bitterly, to learn that God cares for the *doing*, and wants even the right *things* done in the right *way*. Obedience in the very forms and order of Divine service tests the deep feeling of God's worshippers. Apostles recognized the importance even of forms when enjoined, “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

II. JUDGMENT TAUGHT THE NEED FOR THOUGHTFULNESS AND CARE. Haste is as unfitting as self-will in matters of God's worship. Consideration; due attention to precedents; personal preparation of spirit; serious demeanour—all properly attend on Divine service. God wants the signs and indications of real heart-feeling and deep sincerity.

III. JUDGMENT TAUGHT THE DUTY OF FINDING FIT INSTRUMENTS FOR GOD'S WORK. Holy duties should not be done by unsuitable hands. No common persons might touch the sacred ark. The proper persons were the Levites, and a particular family of them. Illustrate the need for a wiser selection of instruments in connection with the work of the modern Church. Compare the apostolic injunctions, “Lay hands suddenly on no man;” “Let such first be proved.”

IV. JUDGMENT TAUGHT THE REVERENT TREATMENT OF THE SYMBOLS OF DIVINE PRESENCE. Without adopting strained ideas of sacramental virtue, we too may learn this lesson. Sanctuaries, sacraments, Bibles, etc., because of their sacred associations

and suggestions, properly demand reverent treatment. Only shallow and self-satisfied natures fail in reverence. A worthy sense of the infinite glory of the Unseen, Eternal, and Divine, gains fitting expression in the reverent touch of all earth-symbols that bring the Eternal near. There may be danger of stopping with the symbol, even as heathen stopped with the idol; but the fact that danger lies in excess does not relieve us from the claims of the symbolic, as set within wise limitations. There is danger of overdoing forms. But there is also danger of an undue indifference to forms; and this kind of danger is seriously imperilling to some important features of the religious life. This may be practically illustrated in relation to long-received *forms of doctrine*, and long-hallowed *rites and symbols*. They who would sincerely honour God must not be unmindful of the reverence that is due to his ark.—R. T.

Vers. 12—14.—Due preparation for Divine service. Not only was David on this occasion careful to employ the proper persons, but he was anxious that they should be properly prepared and fitted for their solemn duty. He commands them to "sanctify themselves," that is, to go through the ceremonies by which the Mosaic priesthood were prepared for ritual duties (see Lev. xi. 44; Numb. xi. 18; 2 Chron. xxix. 5, etc.). God has ever shown anxiety over men's preparation-times. A long preparation-time may precede a very brief period of work, but the efficiency of the work always depends on the preparation. Illustrate from the preparations for the first Passover; from the answer of our Lord's disciples, "Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?" from the actual experience of our Lord, who had thirty silent years, and then a long spell of desert meditations; from such cases as that of Moses, who had forty years in the Horeb district, and of Saul, who was a long while in the deserts of Arabia; from such a case as that of Savonarola, who had many years of study and prayer in the monastery before he commenced his brief eight years of public ministry. In all ages, and now, the holiest and best men have deeply felt the need of times of devout meditation and prayer and spiritual preparation, before engaging in Divine service; and such personal preparations are quite as important for worshippers as for ministers. The neglect of them is the secret of the limited blessing that so often attends the means of grace.

I. PREPARATION-TIMES ARE NECESSARY. 1. Because of the solemnity attaching to every form of Divine worship or work. 2. Because of God's reasonable demand that everything we do for him shall be done with our best powers and our whole heart, therefore with due consideration and effort. 3. Because man is so absorbed in worldly things, that he cannot *at once* disengage himself so as fittingly to attend to heavenly and Divine things. 4. Because the hurry and bustle of life makes an agitation and excitement of mind and feeling that are unsuited to religious occupations.

II. PREPARATION-TIMES BEAR DIRECT RELATION TO FAITHFULNESS. Because they test our spirit when no eye is upon us, and there is none but God to take account of our doings. It is an easy thing to be devout and attentive and particular when we have all the surroundings of the great congregation; but only God knows whether we are really in tune for our work and our worship. He reckons faithfulness by our heart-states, not merely by our life-actions.

III. PREPARATION-TIMES BEAR DIRECTLY ON SPIRITUAL PROFIT. This is the other side of the matter. Blessings come to us only as we are in moods to receive them. There is a "set of the soul" towards heavenly and Divine things on which the influence of teachings and holy surroundings entirely depends. When that "set of the soul" is secured, the smallest and simplest "means of grace" prove nourishing. And we are in large measure responsible for securing it. The great things of God are revealed unto "babes," unto the simple-minded and open-hearted and devoutly toned. Our spiritual profit depends on ourselves.

IV. PREPARATION-TIMES ARE NEVER WASTED TIMES. Though we are liable to regard them as such, because they seem to have no tangible result, the issues of them we cannot count and measure. But school-time is not wasted time, for it fits the boy for life. Apprentice-time is not wasted time, for its issues are seen in vigorous and skilled manhood. There never can be waste in efficiently *getting ready*; and this is fully true in religious spheres.

Practical application of these points may be made to three or four forms of modern

religious life: *e.g.* prayer, almsgiving, worship, sacraments, Christian work. In relation to them all God's call to us is, "Sanctify yourselves for it."—R. T.

Vers. 16-24.—*Music and song consecrated to God's service.* For traces of singing in connection with religious ceremonies, see Exod. xv. 21; Judg. v. 1; ch. xiii. 8. It seems to have been cultivated in the "schools of the prophets" (1 Sam. x. 5). From the time of David's appointment of these Levites to this special department, "the services of the tabernacle and the temple were regularly choral, and a considerable section of the Levites was trained in musical knowledge, and set apart to conduct this part of the national worship." Reference may be made to the prejudices of the Puritans, the Scotch, and some sections of the older Nonconformists to music and song in Divine worship. Even Christian hymns have sometimes been introduced with difficulty, and any elaboration of the musical part of Divine worship is, even now, often regarded with anxiety. Such facts seem to us strange; but they are adequately explained by a wise estimate of the struggles and conflicts through which the Christian Church has passed. The conflict has often been over some non-essential, and even indifferent, matter; but this was only the outward seeming. The conflict really concerned *vital principle*. The trivial matter over which the fight seemed to wage gained an undue importance thus, and the relics of its fictitious value linger long with conservative-toned Christian people. Cultured Christian feeling may be safely left to decide the appropriate and the inappropriate in Church music and song; and no precise standards need be fixed for all classes of the Christian community. Historical associations properly affect the ritual of some. And successive generations of witnesses for the claims of spiritual life over ritual observance cannot fail to influence the practices of others. Still the development of the heart of music has greatly tended to unite all parties in the full dedication of this gift to the service of the house of the Lord. As this subject has been previously treated, a simple outline may here suffice.

I. MUSIC AND SONG SERVING GOD IN FAMILY SPHERES. It is often made a gracious power in the home. The home is a temple, and should always be thought of as a sanctuary of the Lord, to which should be brought the best gifts.

II. MUSIC AND SONG SERVING GOD IN SPHERES OF PRIVATE CHRISTIAN WORK. During a recent period of distress in Manchester, some cultivated Christian ladies proved how the otherwise closed doors of the sick and suffering poor could be opened by the attractions of beautiful song.

III. MUSIC AND SONG SERVING GOD IN PUBLIC CHURCH SERVICES. Show the importance of choirs in relation to the *pathos* and the *pleasure* of Christian worship.

IV. MUSIC AND SONG SERVING GOD IN SPECIAL EFFORTS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO MASSES. As illustrated in the creation of hymns and tunes for evangelistic services, and in recent revival movements.

Plead that the faculties and talents of music and song are for the *Lord*, and that they come under this twofold law: (1) they must be laid on his altar of service; and (2) they must be cultured for efficient use.—R. T.

Ver. 29.—*Intensity in religion is often misunderstood.* "One only incident tarnished the brightness of this greatest day of David's life. Michal, his wife, in the proud, we may almost say conservative, spirit of the older dynasty—not without a thought of her father's fallen house—poured forth her contemptuous reproach on the king who had descended to the dances and song of the Levitical procession." There are marked differences in the dispositions of men in relation to religion. The colder-natured are apt to regard the impulsive as extravagant; and the warm-hearted and excitable too readily conclude that the quieter-toned people are insincere. Explain the Eastern ecstatic modes of expressing joy. In time of excitement, rhythmical movements, such as dancing, afford great relief. And such clanging of trumpet and cymbals was the very thing to set the company upon dancing. Distinguish the natural movements and gestures of excited feeling from the ordered fashionable dancing with which we are familiar. What lessons may be learned from Michal's inability to appreciate David's religious intensity?

I. RELIGION FINDS DIFFERENT RESPONSE IN DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALS. We must not look for the same experiences and manifestations in all. Each man's religious

conduct will bear the plain impress of his character and disposition. This may be applied to experiences of conversion-time, or the beginnings of the Christian life. As also to the forms in which men stand related to public worship and Christian work. If we venture to make moulds for the necessary Christian life, we must take care that they are large and general, with no fine lines of *must-be peculiarities* in them. Christ gives a new life, and sends each man forth to express it according to his own genius and character.

II. RELIGION CAN FIND EXPRESSION THROUGH ALL DISPOSITIONS. So we may not, even in thought, exempt any man from its gracious influence; and we may not be anxious to have the natural dispositions of men changed. Men do not need to be made other than they are. The all-sufficing change is the inward regeneration, the renewal of the vital principle. We need not want to make the channel of the river bend and turn in any other and, as we think, more graceful forms. Our anxiety should concern the purity of the waters flowing down from the fountain-head, which fill the stream. Preservation of the characteristic disposition is, however, quite consistent with all due Christian culture, and this may sometimes so bring out to the front the best in men, that they may seem other than they were.

III. CHRISTIAN CHARITY FINDS A FREE SPHERE FOR EVERY MAN. Just in this Michal failed. She had not charity enough to give David credit for the *sincerity* which would have clothed his act with dignity. A man's ways may not be our ways, may not even be such as we can approve; but it should suffice for us if we can see in them the signs of genuine religious life and feeling. Then we may wish him "God-speed."

Application of a practical character may be carefully made to those more enthusiastic and excited phases of religious life and association which are so marked a feature of nineteenth-century Christianity. From the calmer, colder point of view, such as Michal would take, there may seem in all these only a perilous fanaticism. The charity that "hopeth all things" may at least enable us to say, in the spirit of our Lord, "Forbid them not, for they that are not against him are on his part." And his kingdom has its on-coming in wondrous ways; no man knoweth how.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVI.

Vers. 1--3.—These three verses rather belong to the close of the last chapter, and they carry on the parallel of 2 Sam. vi. in its vers. 17—19.

Ver. 1.—In the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it. So ch. xv. 1 distinctly states that David had "pitched a tent" for the ark, and evidently to be ready for its arrival. On the other hand, there is no mention of any such tent having been got in readiness in ch. xiii. or in 2 Sam. vi. 1—11, which give the account of the attempt that disastrously failed. The expressions which are there used would rather lead to the conclusion that David's intention was to take the sacred structure into his own home (2 Sam. vi. 9, 10; ch. xiii. 12, 13), for a while, at all events. The *תְּן* (tent) of the original designates, when intended strictly, a haircloth covering, resting on poles or planks (Exod. xxvi. 7, 11; xxxvi. 14, 19). The first occasion of the use of the word is found in Gen. iv. 20. The *תְּן* (booth) was made of leaves and

branches interwoven (Lev. xxiii. 34, 40, 42; Deut. xvi. 13). The *תְּן* (tabernacle) was the dwelling-place or pavilion, which owned to the ten inner curtains as well as the outer covering and the framework (Exod. xxv. 9; xxvi. 1, 12—15, etc.; xxxix. 32; xl. 2, 29). The first occurrence of this word is in the first of these last-quoted references. Burnt sacrifices and peace offerings. The identical words of 2 Sam vi. 17, 18, where the Authorized Version translates "burnt offerings and peace offerings." These were the two great sacrifices—the former speaking of atonement (Lev. i. 3—9, etc.), the latter of reconciliation effected and the enjoyment of peace (Lev. iii. 1—5, etc.). Neither here nor in the parallel place is any mention made of the altar upon which these sacrifices were offered.

Ver. 2.—He blessed the people in the name of the Lord; *i.e.* reverently in the Name of the Lord, and as vividly conscious of being in his presence, he pronounces blessings upon the people, and by short ejaculatory prayer and holy wish further begs for them those blessings which God only can give. In the time of David and

Solomon (1 Kings viii. 14) the king realized far more closely the idea of the paternal relation to the people than had ever been since the time of the patriarchs of the elder days.

Ver. 3.—Each little clause of this verse is replete with interest. The royal giver, who now dealt to every one of Israel, was, after all, but a channel; yes, and only one channel, through which the fulness and the bounty of the royal Giver of every good and perfect gift, of all good whatsoever, of all things necessary to life and godliness, are supplied to every one of his creature-subjects. But it is highest honour, as servant and instrument alone, to figure forth him in any way. The second little clause tells us either that women took a recognized place on occasion of this joyous festival, or that the hospitality of such an occasion did not forget them and their homes. And the following three little clauses require closer examination. The word here translated "loaf" in the expression loaf of bread is **לְבָבָה**, for which in this sense we may turn to Exod. xxix. 23; Judg. viii. 5; 1 Sam. ii. 36; x. 3; Prov. vi. 26; Jer. xxxvii. 21. The corresponding word, however, in the parallel place is **לְבָבָה** (for which see Exod. xxix. 2, 23; Lev. ii. 4; vii. 12, 13; viii. 26; xxiv. 5; Numb. vi. 15, 19; xv. 20). The essential meaning of the former word is a *circle*, hence applied to the cake because of its shape, and of the latter word *perforation*, hence applied to the cake because it was perforated. A good piece of flesh. This is the Authorized Version rendering of **בָּשָׂר**, which occurs only in the parallel place and here. The Vulgate translates *assatura bulba carnis*; the Septuagint, *εσχαπτην*. The imagined derivation of the word from **בָּשָׂר** (ox) and **בָּשָׂר** (fire), or from **בָּשָׂר** (to burn), seems to be what has led to these translations, helped, perhaps, by the apparent convenience of adapting *meat* from the sacrifice to the *bread*. But Gesenius, Rödiger, Keil, and others prefer the derivation **בָּשָׂר** (to measure), and they would render "a measure" of wine. And a flagon. This is the Authorized Version rendering of the original **מִשְׁנָה**, found in the parallel place as well as here, and also in the only other places (two in number, and in the plural) where it occurs (Cant. ii. 5; Hosea iii. 1). But there is no doubt, or but little, that the rendering should rather be "dried, pressed cakes of raisins or grapes." It is then to be derived from the root **שָׂנָה** (to press). The substantive has both masculine and feminine form in plural. The Vulgate translates *similam frixum oleo*, which means a "baked-cake of flour and oil;" and the Septuagint, *λαγανον* and *τηγανον* in the

parallel places. But here the Septuagint reads *ἄρτον ἐπα ἀρτοκριτικὸν καὶ ἔμορτρην* as the whole account of the loaf, the good piece of flesh, and the flagon.

Ver. 4—7.—These verses contain a statement of the arrangement David made of a more permanent nature, but to date from this commencement, for the service of thanksgiving by the Levites.

Ver. 4.—To minister; i.e. to officiate, as we should say, in the service before the ark. The verse seems to describe what should be the essence of that service. It was threefold—to record, to thank, and to praise the Lord God of Israel. The word here used for "record" is the Hiph. of **זָרַע** (to remember), and is remarked upon by Gesenius as a title strictly appropriate to the character of the two psalms xxxviii. and lxx., on the head of which it stands, as meaning, "to make others remember" (see also such passages as Exod. xx. 24; 2 Sam. viii. 16; xviii. 18; xx. 24; Isa. xliii. 26; lii. 7). The minds of the people were to be refreshed in this service and in their very psalm of praise (so note in this sense vers. 8, 9, 12, 21, etc.), by being reminded or told, so far as the youngest of them might be concerned, of God's marvellous and merciful deeds for their forefathers of many, many a generation. Then they were to give intelligent and hearty thanks. And, lastly, they were to offer to approach that purest form of worship which consists in adoring praise. One might imagine with what zest they would have accepted, with what fervour they would have added lip and instrument of music to it—that one verse which needed the revolution yet of nearly another three thousand years, that it might flow from the devotion of Addison.

"When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise."

Ver. 5.—Obed-edom. No colon should follow this name. And the first time of the occurrence of the name Jeiel in this verse should probably have shown the Jaaziel of ch. xv. 18. The contents of this verse put us then, into possession of this much, that Asaph presided (ch. vi. 39) at this musical service, and that his instrument was the cymbals (ch. xv. 19), with which time was kept; that Zechariah was next to him, and, with eight others formed a band, who played on psalteries (or lutes) and harps. If we may guide ourselves by vers. 20, 21 of the preceding chapter, three of these—viz. Mattithia, Jeiel, Obed-edom—performed on the harp, the other six on the psaltery, or lute.

Ver. 6.—Jahaziel. Probably the Eliazer,

who in ch. xv. 24 is coupled as priest with Benaiah, should stand in the place of this name or else *vice versa*.

Ver. 7.—The rendering should run, *On that day did David first commit to the hand of Asaph and his brethren to render praises to Jehovah*; i.e. after the following manner and words. The word *first* marks the solemn establishment of set public worship in the metropolis.

Vers. 8—36.—These verses, then, provide the form of praise which David wished to be used on this, and probably in grateful repetition on some succeeding occasions. David makes selections from four psalms already known; for it cannot be supposed that the verses we have here were the original, and that they were afterwards supplemented. The first fifteen verses (viz. 8—22) are from Ps. cv. 1—15. The next eleven verses (23—33) are from Ps. xcvi. 1—13; but a small portion of the first and last of these verses is omitted. Our thirty-fourth verse is identical with Ps. cxvii. 1; cxviii. 1; cxxxvi. 1; and forms the larger part of Ps. cvi. 1. It is, in fact, a doxology. And our thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth verses consist of a short responsive (“and say ye”) invocation, followed by another doxology. These are taken from Ps. cvi. 47, 48. Hereupon “all the people” are directed to find the final outburst of praise to Jehovah and “Amen.” In the first of these selections (vers. 8—23) there is no material variation from the language of the psalm itself. Yet the original psalm has *Abraham*, where our own thirteenth verse reads *Israel*. And the original psalm uses the third person, where our fifteenth and nineteenth verses have the second person. In the second selection it is worthy of note that our ver. 29, “Come before him,” probably preserves the ante-temple reading, while Ps. xcvi. 8 was afterwards, to fit temple times, altered into, “Come *into his courts*.” The arrangement of all the succeeding clauses does not exactly agree with the arrangement of them found in the psalm, as for instance in the latter half of our ver. 30 and in ver. 31, compared with the clauses of vers. 10, 11 of the psalm. Again, one clause of the tenth verse of the psalm, “He shall judge the people righteously,” is not found in either alternative position open to it through the inversion of clauses, in our vers. 30, 31. The rhythm and metre of the psalm are, however, equally unexceptionable. The whole of the twenty-nine verses of this psalm of praise (vers. 8—36 inclusive) are divided into portions of three verses each, except the portion vers. 23—27 inclusive, which consists of five verses. As regards the matter of it, it may be remarked on as breaking into two parts, in the first of

which (vers. 8—22) the people are reminded of their past history and of the marvellous providence which had governed their career from Abraham to the time they were settled in Canaan, but in the second (vers. 23—36) their thought is enlarged, their sympathies immensely widened, so as to include all the world, and their view is borne on to the momentous reality of *judgment*.

Vers. 8—10.—These verses are an animated invocation to thanks and praise.

Vers. 11—14.—The call to thanksgiving and to the praise of adoration is now in these verses succeeded by an earnest admittance to practical seeking of the Lord, and mindful obedience to him.

Vers. 14—22.—These verses rehearse the ancient and blissful covenant which had made Israel so to differ. These are called mine anointed . . . my prophets, in harmony with what we read in the splendid passage, Exod. xix. 3—6. The substitution in our vers. 15, 19 of the second person pronoun plural, in place of the third person of the psalm, helps speak the reality of this occasion and its dramatic correctness. The literal original of our Authorized Version in ver. 19, but few, even a few, is, *men of number*, i.e. men who could easily be numbered.

Vers. 23—36.—The grandeur and unusual comprehensiveness of the adoration and homage here proclaimed, as to be offered to the omnipotent Ruler of all nations, should be well pondered. Our eye and ear may have become too familiar with it, but when put a little into relief, and referred to its original time of day, it is fit to be ranked among the strongest moral evidences of inspiration in the word and the speaker.

Vers. 23.—This verse is composed of the latter half of each of the first two verses of the psalm (xcvi.).

Vers. 34—36.—These verses, from the first, forty-seventh, and forty-eighth of Ps. vii., must have suggested the sad intermediate contents of that psalm, the significant key-note of which is sounded in our thirty-fifth verse. The suggestion in the midst of the unbounded gladness of this day is affecting, and must have been intended for salutary lesson and timely warning. In the midst of the fulness of praise and joy, the people are led to prayer—say ye—and the prayer is an humble petition for salvation, union, and protection from every enemy. God’s treatment of his anointed people had been on his part one continued protection and one prolonged salvation. Yet they had often neither prayed for these nor acknowledged them. Now they are led again by the hand, as it were, to the footstool of the throne.

Vers. 37—43.—These verses give the now new-ordained distribution of priests and

Levites, to minister and to attend to the service of praise before the ark. And the first of them may be considered to mark an important step in advance in the crystallizing of the world's ecclesiastical institutions. Asaph and his brethren of song are left there before the ark of the covenant . . . to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required. A permanent local ministry and choir are thus established, with a fixity of place on Zion, and regularity of time that had been hitherto unattainable.

Ver. 38.—*Obed-edom with their brethren.* Explanation is needed of the *plural* pronoun “their.” Either another name is wanted with Obed-edom, or tacit reference is made to “Asaph and his brethren,” as though the name Asaph had *not* been followed in its own place by the clause “and his brethren.” Keil draws attention to the “three score and two” of ch. xxvi. 8, in connection with the three score and eight of this place; and it has been proposed to make up this number by some of the sons of Hosah, of our following verse and of ch. xxvi. 11. In this case the name Hosah might be the name missing before, “and their brethren.” Conjecture, however, has not sufficient clue here to warrant it, and the textual state of this verse must be debited with the obscurity. The ambiguity respecting the name Obed-edom has already (ch. xiii. 14) been alluded to. Neglecting this ambiguity, it may be repeated that Obed-edom, . . . son of Jeduthun (as the *Keri* of this passage is) was a Merarite Levite, while Obed-edom son of Jeduthun (ch. xv. 25) was of Gath-rimmon, a Gittite (2 Sam. vi. 10-12; Josh. xxi. 24), a Kohathite (ch. vi. 66, 69), and a Korhite (ch. xxvi. 1-5).

Ver. 39.—While those above-mentioned were to officiate before the ark on Zion, those mentioned in this and following verses are the officiating staff at Gibeon. It is now brought into prominence that the ark and the tabernacle are in two separate places. The great ordinary sacrifices and services, “all that is written in the Law of the Lord,” are carefully observed on the original altar (Exod. xxxviii. 2) in the tabernacle. Other and special sacrifices evidently were offered in the presence of the ark. The tabernacle erected in the wilderness was first stationed at Shiloh (Josh. xviii. 1; 1 Sam. iv. 3, 4). The occasion of its removal to Nob (1 Sam. xxi. 1; xxii. 19) is not narrated. The present passage first tells us where it had been since the slaughter of the priests at Saul's command by Doeg the Edomite. Some distinct statement, like that of ch. xxi. 29 and 2 Chron. i. 3, might have been expected here. Zadok the priest is given (ch. vi. 4-9) as in the line of Eleazar.

Ver. 40.—*To offer burnt offerings; i.e. the customary morning and evening sacrifices.*

Vers. 41, 42.—Comparing these verses with vers. 4-6 and 37-40, it may be supposed that we are intended to understand that of all who were set apart and who had been expressed by name (as *e.g.* ch. xv. 4-24), some were now formally appointed to serve before the ark, and some in the tabernacle at Gibeon. The confusion existing in these verses by the repetition of the preposition with, and the proper names Heman and Jeduthun, betrays some corruptness of text. The Septuagint does not show them in the latter verse. The sons of Jeduthun are found in ch. xxv. 3.

Ver. 43.—(See 2 Sam. vi. 19, 20.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-43.—*The unusual services on Zion's height, typical.* The greater part of the contents of this chapter must be viewed as borrowed matter—the appropriating of portions of sacred songs or psalms which already existed, to this individual occasion. The stricter homiletic treatment, therefore, of our vers. 7-36 may be better found in the portions of the psalms concerned, in their own proper place. But there are some larger aspects offered by the matter of this chapter, which may be appropriately considered in this place. And we may notice—

I. FIRST OF ALL, THE GATHERING FORCE OF RELIGION. It has indeed already gathered such force as to conquer for itself the place which it holds on this great day of David. To this it has grown since the day of Seth and Enos, when we read of it thus, “Then began men to call on the Name of the Lord” (Gen. iv. 26). And though true it is that we may not critically make any great doctrine or argument depend on the uncertain exegesis of that one sentence, yet we know that the *facts*, so far as we require them now, were not distant from what the sentence says. The religion of mankind then, where existent at all, was the pure, individual, essential principle, Heaven-given and reigning in the hearts of a very few—this still and evermore of necessity its essence. Then, how-

ever, when men could be numbered only by the score, it was manifestly impossible for religion to exhibit the "effects" which it does in the time of David. Nay, of ages afterwards it were, of course, true to say the same thing, and to add this also, that when, so far as numbers were concerned, it became *possible*, still it did not become fact. Through all these ages, however, with all receding tides, and notwithstanding some *extraordinary* checks, religion never became utterly lost to sight. Once during those ages it showed a number not exceeding eight, another time not fewer than seven thousand, and, for the most part, what the number was, greater or less, God only knew—he alone could say. Yet through good report and ill, through good times and bad, it was acquiring strength unmeasured and immeasurable. It was insisting on its own vitality; it was proving the courage of its convictions; its tone was of no uncertain kind; its mien was ever of the undaunted. In patriarchal succession of families, what pungent lessons religion many a time taught and made itself known thereby! In Egyptian times, amid temptation and snare, what various knowledge and determination it was maturing! In the wilderness, how carefully by form, by sacrifice, by sign, by judgment, it was shaping individual and national life. Amid the dangers and the glories of the people's settlement in the land of promise, amid the achievements of judges and leaders and captains, and the multitudinous strifes of little kings, its pronounced voice spoke the word and it was done, or, if the voice was silent, the people were undone. All this time, measurable only by thousands of years, it was betraying its existence, indicating its nature, betokening a large store of sleeping strength, and anything but seeming to exhaust or to strain its own energy. But now the principle of religion seems to have burst into full life. Its many and outspreading branches hang down with ripe and golden fruit. Now it is the light and life, the joy and strength, the reverence and pride of a whole nation, from the highest to the lowest. All business, all pleasure, all other thought or care, stand still to look, or throng to join in a scene festive of festivity itself. The day itself is ablaze, not with the ordinary light and heat of a splendid sun over Zion's heights, but with the service and joy of religion in a hundred thousand hearts—in "Jerusalem and all Judæa," but culminating in Zion. And it is all because "In Judah God is known, his Name great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion." Blessed glimpse of what it will be for this world, when "God shall all renew," and the joy become universal.

II. THE ATTAINMENT OF A CONSPICUOUS AND FIXED HOME FOR RELIGION. Though the world of mankind is some three thousand years old, religion had been as yet but a wayfarer. It had never deserted men. Its spirit had influenced, guided, ruled their spirit; it had consoled their sorrows, heightened their joys ten thousand separate times; but it has not yet had an honoured dwelling-place, a worthy throne, a fixed home. To this it has now come, and to this it has been brought up by the willing enthusiasm of king and prophet, priest and people. There can be no doubt that its local habitation exposes it to some danger, to some misunderstanding. The long process of ages has been undoing, is still undoing the danger, correcting the misunderstanding. The city then emphatically set on a hill has never been hidden. Ten thousand others, the spiritual copies of it, have taken its name upon them, and have helped thereby to prove practically that Zion's glory that day did not foreshadow the *exclusiveness* of an individual place, but only the sure foundation and settled firmness of God's own Church, and its exalted, commanding prominence. The typical lessons, therefore, of the day on which David fixed the symbols and the services and the servants of a true, revealed religion on Zion are not to the effect that religion itself is anything less than a pure, silent, but mighty principle in the heart, but rather that it is to be the avowed, conspicuous, and abiding principle of the life, and of the life of all. The distribution of religion is emphatically *not* to be partial. The influences of it are emphatically *not* to be intelligible only to an initiated few. The force of it is emphatically *not* to expend itself invisibly, and exhaust itself according to individual fickleness or frailty. It is to state its character, its quality, its very nature before all the world, and under the blaze of publicity itself—a testimony for or against every man to the eye or ear of whom it has become proclaimed. And in spite of one or two temporary and superficial appearances to the contrary, these were the truths which that day was proffering to teach. For a while, perhaps, it was "Zion's height alone;" some thought it was to be always "Zion's height alone;" but faithful history

and imperious necessity have proved the contrary, and have proved *that to have been never meant.*

“Not now on Zion’s height alone
Thy favoured worshipper may dwell.
* * * * *
“To thee, at last, in every clime
Shall temples rise and praise be sung.”

III. THE ELEMENTS OF THE RELIGIOUS JOY OF A NATION’S GRANDEST FESTIVAL. These are certainly not obscurely told here. They consist in thanks for all that is, and adoring praise for him, from whom all good is. The mind and memory have been stirred up, and from their depth and their breadth come the testimonials of his boundless compassion, mighty deliverance, tenderest mercy, good gift and grace. The heart knows the meaning, and, though often too insensible, now owns the joy. Happy is that teacher of religion who, with Divine help and the Divine Spirit, can make the mind and memory do this, some of their highest and most fruitful work. He will be a useful teacher, preacher, pastor, guide of souls. Angels very likely may spring at once to adoration’s highest reach and strain direct. But we are permitted to rise thither through the appeal to our nature of gratitude. The religious service and language of this day is the reiteration of appeal to give thanks, while the ground for doing so is simply and impressively told. This mingles a vein of pathos, of confession, of dependent prayer; and then acclamation and the praise not of thanksgiving, but of adoration, fill every heart and tongue. Such is the worship for such as we have been, when we get above. Such are the songs of heaven and its temple. Such the joy of each and of all, who there recount with the fulness of gratitude dangers past, sin forgiven, guilt cleansed away, salvation freely given, till the enraptured soul is lost in adoration and “glories in the praise” of Jehovah.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—Sacrifice and blessing. The manner in which David celebrated the reception of the ark into its appointed tent on the height of his city was thoroughly characteristic. He acted as a king, and as a kind of royal mediator between the God of heaven and the chosen people Israel.

I. **HE BLESSED THE LORD IN THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE.** For this was certainly the significance of the sacrifices, burnt offerings, and peace offerings. In offering them, the king was publicly acknowledging the authority of the supreme Lord, was publicly adoring and praising him as the God of the nation, and was publicly seeking his favour and countenance. Not that David offered these sacrifices with his own hands. What he did by means of the priests, whom he directed, he is represented as doing himself. It was a high day, a solemn and joyful festivity; and it was becoming that the Lord should be recognized, sought, and praised.

II. **HE BLESSED THE PEOPLE IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.** Probably he pronounced a solemn benediction, invoking the gracious regard of the God of Israel upon the chosen nation. With the ark of the covenant in their possession, in the midst of their metropolis, the people might well be encouraged to rejoice in the presence and favour of him who is ever the Source of all good. It is a proof of David’s policy that he took this opportunity of feasting the assembled multitudes. This would no doubt create a favourable impression upon all minds. Their spiritual privileges, and their happiness in having a king so considerate and liberal as David to reign over them, would be associated in their minds. They would connect their religion and their loyalty together, and would cherish happy recollections of the solemnities of the day.—T.

Ver. 4.—Ministerial service. Although the Levites were set apart for the service of the Lord’s house, even from the days of Moses, it is certain that the Levitical services were more fully organized by David, and that from his time there was more of system and more of efficiency in their ministrations. There is so marked a difference between

the Jewish Church and the Christian Church, that we can only apply the general principles of the former to the latter. Yet the text may well suggest to us that—

I. PUBLIC WORSHIP HAS SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY. Worship, to be acceptable, must be from the heart. But out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. It is natural and appropriate that the sentiments and desires of the soul should find a vocal utterance; and it is also natural and appropriate that those who have the same tribute to offer should join together and offer it in common. The Book of the Acts in the New Testament sanctions such worship equally with these Books of Chronicles in the Old.

II. PUBLIC WORSHIP SHOULD CONSIST LARGEY OF THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE. According to the text, the Levites recorded and celebrated the glorious deeds of the Most High, adored his attributes, gave thanks for his forgiving mercy, his bounty, and loving-kindness. We do not want less prayer in our congregations, but we do want more praise. "His mercy endureth for ever;" and while his mercy endures his praises should not cease.

III. PUBLIC WORSHIP SHOULD BE LED BY APPOINTED MINISTERS. Common sense may teach us so much. If praise is to be sung, some musical leaders must conduct it. If the Scriptures are to be read, some human voice must read them. If prayer is to be offered, some one must pour forth the language of petition, in which others may join, whether silently or audibly. If the gospel is to be heard by men, "how shall they hear without a preacher?" Scripture precedents abound for ministerial service.

IV. WHILE PUBLIC WORSHIP MUST BE PROPERLY CONDUCTED, IT MUST NOT BE DELEGATED TO ANY FUNCTIONARIES OR OFFICIALS, WHOSE SERVICES MAY BE SUBSTITUTED FOR THAT OF THE PEOPLE. Levites under the old dispensation, pastors and teachers under the new, may aid the devotions of the people, but their offering cannot be accepted in the place of what God requires—a song, a prayer, from every heart. "Praise the Lord, all ye people!" The Christian Church admits of no exclusive priesthood; all Christians are priests unto God the Father, inasmuch as all offer to him sacrifices of willing obedience and grateful praise.

CONCLUSION. 1. A rebuke to the ungrateful and undevout, who, whilst they daily receive God's mercies, acknowledge not the Giver. 2. A rebuke to the formal and ceremonial, who excuse themselves from offering sacrifices of praise on the ground that this "religious duty" is fulfilled by appointed officials. 3. A reminder and summons, to which all sincere Christians will do well to take heed. Some spiritual ministry and service may be fulfilled by every Christian; and it is a high honour to be permitted to lead the praises and the supplications of the people of the Lord.—T.

Vers. 7—36.—*A psalm.* When the king had organized a choir of musicians, had provided them with their instruments, had assigned them their duties and their maintenance, it remained for him to decide what they were to sing. He was himself "the sweet psalmist of Israel." It is difficult for us to imagine what psalmody must have been before the time of David. It is a grand vocation—that of putting words of praise into the lips of worshippers. And it was a glorious burst of sacred song which pealed from the heights of Jerusalem when the sublime odes of David were first rolled to heaven upon the wings of the wind. What a revelation of God, what an inspiration for man, what new life to the world, when the psalms were first wrought into shape by the glowing heart and the glorious eloquence of David! The later Levitical psalms are perhaps more reflective and elaborate, but those composed by the lyrical sovereign of Israel have at once the simplest piety, the profoundest feeling, and the most vigorous eloquence. The occasion of the composition, or, at all events, the first public rendering of David's odes, was one worthy of such efforts. When the ark found a resting-place in the city of David, when Jerusalem was consecrated by the public and regal recognition of the Divine Law, when the Levites solemnly addressed Jehovah in the name of Israel,—then this magnificent psalm was sung, now in melodious recitative, and again in resounding chorus, to the accompaniment of cymbal, of trumpet, and of harp. It was a fitting inauguration of a series of sublime solemnities. When we examine the structure of the psalm, we are surprised and filled with admiration at the appropriateness, the beauty, the comprehensiveness of the composition. The psalm, as it is recorded in this place, agrees with what we find in the hundred and fifth, ninety-sixth,

hundred and seventh, and hundred and sixth psalms. Taken as we here find it, it contains—

I. AN ADMONITION AND SUMMONS TO PRAISE THE LORD. This is addressed to nature (vers. 30—33), to mankind in general (ver. 28), especially to Israel (ver. 13).

II. A RECORD OF GOD'S GOODNESS. And this both to the patriarchs (vers. 15—18), and to Israel as a nation, to whom that goodness had been displayed in the most critical period of their history (vers. 19—22).

III. PRAISE OF GOD'S ATTRIBUTES AND CHARACTER. (Vers. 24—29, 34.) Never had these been so devoutly and at the same time so poetically celebrated as now and here.

IV. PRAYER FOR SALVATION. This petition (ver. 35) flows most naturally out of what precedes. In the register of Divine acts, in the recounting of Divine attributes, a foundation had been laid for this devout and urgent entreaty.

V. BLESSING AND AMEN. A glorious closing (ver. 36) to a glorious psalm. "All the people" here concurred with, adopted as their own, the worship of the Levites. The royal psalmist's heart must have beat high with sacred joy when his plans proved successful, when his ministers rendered his compositions in a manner worthy of their substance, and when the soul of a nation was raised into fellowship with God.—T.

Vers. 1—3.—Hours of elation. The path of human life lies, for the most part, along the level of simple and ordinary experiences, amid scenes and circumstances that annoy or depress but do not greatly grieve, or that please or gladden but do not excite to tumultuous delights. Sometimes, however, that path leads down into deep valleys of profoundest sorrow; sometimes it leads up to the high hills of exhilarating joy. Whether in the depth or upon the summit, we are in peculiar peril. We breathe an unusual air and are in danger of losing control of our full spiritual faculties. Men are sometimes overwhelmed by great sorrow or by supreme delight, and either lose their mental balance altogether or commit actions which they never cease to regret. It is a great thing to have a vent for our intenser feelings, a right channel through which they may safely flow, or rather a sphere in which they may spend their strength, to our own positive advantage and to the profit of others. Our text suggests such a sphere for our energies in the hours of elation. We are reminded—

I. THAT WE MAY GO TO GOD IN SELF-PRESENTATION. In the midst of their rejoicing "they offered burnt sacrifices before God" (ver. 1). The burnt offering was the type of self-dedication unto God. As the offerer brought his victim to be wholly presented to Jehovah, so we are invited to offer our whole selves unto the living God. Our intensest joys attend our greatest mercies, and these may well lead us to renew our vows unto our Redeemer, freely and gladly presenting ourselves, once more, to him whose we are.

II. THAT WE MAY GO TO GOD IN THANKFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT. "They offered peace offerings" also: these are suggestive of the act of praise by which we render thanks to God for all his goodness to us. There can be no time so suitable for this as the hour of elation, when unusual blessings have been conferred by him. We are bound to recognize him as the Source and Spring of all our joy.

III. THAT WE MAY GO TO GOD IN UNSELFISH INVOCATION. "When David had made an end . . . he blessed the people in the Name of the Lord" (ver. 2), i.e. he invoked the Divine blessing upon them. He doubtless used such words as these: "The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make his face shine upon you," etc. (Numb. vi. 24—26). We have no power to impart blessedness by any direct volition of our own, but we can express our earnest desire that men may be blessed; and we can do one thing more and better than that—we can solemnly and earnestly invoke the blessing of God to rest on those whom we love and with whom we desire to share our own prosperity and joy.

IV. WE CAN GO OUT TO OUR NEIGHBOURS IN GENEROUS KINDNESS. David's good feeling took the form of hospitality (ver. 3). He gave to every one then present, bread, flesh, and wine, wherewith to find nourishment and pleasure. When God, in his providence, sends us prosperity, we should distribute freely to our poorer fellows. We may distribute, as David did, of those things which furnish the table. We may let our generosity take other, possibly better, forms than this; we may spend our strength in securing education for the ignorant, position for the unemployed, privilege for the spiritually destitute, opportunity for the aspiring. If thus, in dedication, in thanks-

giving, in invocation, in generosity, we escape from ourselves and go forth unto God and man, we shall pass scathless through the perilous hour of elation, and be not only unharmed by it but blessed in it.—C.

Vers. 4—7, 36—43.—Regular Divine service. These verses may suggest to us whole-some truths respecting the constant worship of God as distinguished from acts of exceptional devotion.

I. THAT DEVOTION MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO EVAPORATE IN TEMPORARY EXCITEMENT. David was wise in not sending the people home (ver. 43) until he had designed a plan or arrangement in virtue of which the thankful spirit of the people should express itself in ordinary and regular exercises (vers. 4—37). The time of revival, of exceptional religious excitement, of spiritual ecstasy, may be very pleasant and promising, but it will end in nothing or in positive evil, if those who prompt and lead it do not devise measures by which it shall find due utterance in permanent institutions.

II. THAT SACRED THINGS MUST BE ENTRUSTED TO THE CHARGE OF CAPABLE AND RESPONSIBLE PERSONS. However admirable the institution, it will not take care of itself. Good things will soon wane and die if they be not taken charge of by living earnest souls. David sought and found the best men to be engaged in the service of praise (vers. 5, 6). In every part of Divine service, success can only be attained and maintained by competent and responsible men taking the matter in hand. If we trust to the intrinsic excellency of the exercise, and allow negligence or favouritism to enter, we may expect speedy, or, at any rate, certain decline and ultimate extinction. In God's service let each post be assigned to that man whom he has made fittest for it, and who will feel that he is personally accountable for the way in which it is kept.

III. THAT INFERIOR POSTS ARE NOT WITHOUT A REAL IMPORTANCE IN THE SERVICE OF GOD. Much mention is made here (as elsewhere) of doorkeepers (vers. 38—43; see Ps. lxxxiv. 10). The doorkeepers of our sanctuaries are men of humble position; nevertheless, they may contribute much by conscientious carefulness and Christian courtesy to the comfort, peace of mind, and devoutness of spirit of the worshippers; and thus to the cause of God. Any position in the service of the Supreme, of a gracious and almighty Redeemer, is one which we do well to "magnify" in our esteem, that we may do our duty therein faithfully, as unto the Lord as well as unto men.

IV. THAT PRAYER AS WELL AS PRAISE MUST BE INCLUDED IN DIVINE SERVICE. Though there was to be daily service at Jerusalem for the future, there must also be daily sacrifice at Gibeon (vers. 39, 40). The choir-master could not do the work of the priest; there must be sacrifice as well as praise. We should multiply our service of song and can hardly go too far in sacred psalmody; yet we must never make light of the prayer of confession, of the entreaty for Divine mercy, of our need to seek again the pardoning love of God.

V. THAT ONE MAN MAY LEAD, BUT ALL MUST PARTICIPATE IN THE SERVICE OF GOD. David alone prepared and delivered the psalm. Asaph alone received it at the king's hand, and made the musical arrangements (vers. 5—7); but "all the people said, *Amen*, and praised the Lord" (ver. 36). It is well sometimes that one man should speak for others, they following and participating in thought, and saying "*Amen*" at the end, in token and utterance of their hearty assent. It is also well—perhaps better—that "all the people" should utter together the words of prayer and praise. Most men can best follow the sense when they utter the sound of sacred words. This is a question for individual and congregational aptitudes and preferences; the matter of importance is that, whatever method be adopted, the service of God shall be one in which all hearts unite in supplication, in adoration, in thanksgiving, in consecration.—C.

Vers. 8—14.—The constituents of piety. In our psalms and in our prayers we often indicate the real elements of religion as fully, and perhaps as clearly, as in our exhortations. In this psalm of David we have the essential principles of piety.

I. MINDFULNESS OF GOD'S POWER AND GOODNESS. (Vers. 8, 9, 12.) We cannot feel toward him as we should except we consider "his deeds among the people," except we "talk of all his wondrous works," except we "remember his marvellous works." Calling these to mind, we shall be powerfully and rightly affected by a realization of his Divine power and goodness. We shall naturally dwell on his works in nature, his

power as displayed in the creation and sustenance of our own spirit and our own human life, his handiwork in the providential ordering of the world.

II. A SENSE OF HIS INTIMATE DIVINE RELATION TO US AND TO THE WHOLE WORLD. (Vers. 13, 14.) As the children of Israel felt that they were chosen of God, having received direct and special communication and consideration; as they could speak of themselves as his "chosen ones," and could say, "He is the Lord *our* God;" so we may and must feel that we all are the objects of his Divine regard, that he looks with benignant eye on us and stretches out the hand of Divine friendship toward us, that he is the Lord *our* God who has chosen us and whom we have chosen. And as they were taught to feel that "his judgments are in all the earth," so we also are to think of him as the supreme almighty Power reigning and ruling everywhere, "speaking and it is done, commanding and it stands fast" (Ps. xxxiii. 9).

III. THANKSGIVING IN MEMORY OF HIS GOODNESS AND MERCY. (Vers. 8, 9.) A large part of the sacred service of the Jews consisted in praise. In heathendom there was much of depreciation, something of supplication, little or nothing of praise. God's own people had such a sense of his absolute excellence that they "gave thanks at the remembrance of his holiness," and such a remembrance of his distinguishing goodness to them that they sang psalms of praise because they were such large recipients at his hand. The piety of the Hebrew was vocal with constantly recurring praise; the psalms of the "sweet singer of Israel," and of Jewish worship altogether, were so largely hymns of thanksgiving, that we always associate the thought of praise with the name of them. And from us, for whom as for them God has done such great things, for whom, indeed, God has done greater things than for them, it may well be that praise is found to be the prevailing note of our worship, the chief strain in our piety.

IV. JOY IN GOD. (Ver. 10.) The people were encouraged to "glory in God's holy Name," to triumph in the thought that they were worshipping him who was the "Holy One of Israel," in every way worthy of their profoundest adoration; also to "rejoice" in him as in One the knowledge and service of whom was the spring of trust and abiding satisfaction. We may well do the same; and having "such an High Priest" as we have, such a Saviour and Divine Friend, such a Refuge of our soul, we may glory and rejoice with intenser joy than they.

V. COMMUNION WITH GOD. (Ver. 11.) We do not enter into the full heritage of the people of God until we "seek the face of the Lord continually." Both in his house and in our own home, we are to seek him, to "seek his strength," to come consciously into his presence, to draw nigh with our spirit to his Spirit, to walk with him, to hold converse with him, to pour out our heart before him, to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, beholding his beauty as well as inquiring in his temple (Ps. xxvii. 4).—O.

Vers. 15—22.—*Human mindfulness of Divine promises.* I. THAT GOD HAS MADE DISTINCT PROMISES TO MANKIND. David speaks here of the "covenant which God made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac" (vers. 15, 16; see ver. 18 and Gen. xvii. 2, xxvi. 3, etc.). We know that he also promised David that he should sit on the throne, and his children after him (ch. xvii. 17). We think also of the primeval promise, looking far forward and embracing such large results (Gen. iii. 15). God has made "exceeding great and precious promises" to us in Christ; he promises to those who are in him pardon, peace, joy, the indwelling Spirit, sanctity, eternal life.

II. THAT OF THESE HIS PROMISES HE HAS GIVEN US ASSURING CONFIRMATION. He "confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant" (ver. 17); he did this in word (ver. 18) and in deed (vers. 19—22). All the promises which are made to us in Christ are confirmed both in word and deed. 1. In Divine Word. By repeated assurances not only from the lips of the Lord himself, but also from the utterances of his inspired apostles. In Scripture we have the most abundant assurances that those who believe in Christ shall enjoy the favour of the eternal Father and possess everlasting life. 2. And also in Divine action; for we have the testimony of all succeeding generations of Christian men, who bear unvarying witness that "God is faithful, who hath called us to the fellowship of his Son" (1 Cor. i. 9). This is surely a confirmation of God's working; for are not all these witnesses his workmanship? are they not his husbandry, his building (Eph. ii. 10; 1 Cor. iii. 9)?

III. THAT IT BEHOVES US TO KEEP THEM IN CONTINUED AND LIVELY REMEMBRANCE.

“Be ye mindful always of his covenant” (ver. 15). In the day of spiritual awakening, in the midst of earnest Christian work, in the time of trouble, in the hour of spiritual struggle and misgiving, in the valley of the shadow of death, we have especial need to be mindful of the promises of God. But they should never be far from us, they should be always within reach, like a sword at our side, like bread beneath the roof, that we may draw them at the approaching danger, that we may resort to them when our heart is a-hungered. We may add, though it is not in the text—

IV. THAT WE MUST NOT FAIL TO COMPLY WITH THE CONDITIONS ATTENDING THEM. God’s promises are never unconditional: there is always an “if” implied if not expressed (2 Sam. vii. 12; 1 Kings ii. 4; Ps. cxxxii. 11, 12). His promises to us of eternal life are conditional on (1) our acceptance of Jesus Christ, and (2) our faithfulness unto death.—C.

Vers. 23—36.—The broader aspect of Hebrew piety. It cannot be denied that there was an aspect of exclusiveness in the religion of Jewry, as seen in the days of our Lord. But it is a question how far this was a lawful and how far an unlawful development of the teaching which had come from above. To some extent it was necessary that the people of God should be separated, in intercourse as well as in thought and sympathy, from the nations around them. We may, however, be assured that the narrow and bigoted ideas which were so firmly embedded in the Jewish mind were the product of their own misconstructions of the Divine Word. Our text, indeed, shows: 1. That the Jewish nation was taught to feel that God was their God in a peculiar sense. He was continually spoken of, in worship, as “the Lord God of Israel” (ver. 36). He had not dealt with any nation as with Israel: he had not made known his judgments to any people as he had to them (Ps. cxlvii. 20). He was *their* God, inasmuch as he had shown peculiar and distinguishing favour to them. 2. That they looked to God for deliverance and separation from other nations. “Save us . . . and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen” (ver. 35). They were led to regard surrounding peoples, with their idolatries and immoralities, as foes over whom they might religiously triumph, and from contact with whom they would wisely shrink. Yet, on the other hand, in distinction from this element of exclusiveness and this narrowness of view and ambition, we have certain elements of breadth. They were taught to regard—

I. THE ENTIRE EARTH AS GOD’S CREATION, AND THE WHOLE WORLD AS UNDER HIS RULE. They sang “of his marvellous works among all nations” (ver. 24). So far were they from imagining that the gods of other nations made those lands, while Jehovah brought themselves and their own land into being, that they sang continually, “All the gods of the people are idols, but the Lord made the heavens” (ver. 26); “The world also shall be stable, that it be not moved” (ver. 30). They undoubtedly believed that the God whom they worshipped had unbounded sovereignty over all lands and nations.

II. THE HEATHEN AS THOSE WHO OUGHT TO WORSHIP GOD. They were invited, in their public worship, to express the sentiment that it was only “due to the Name of the Lord” that “all the earth” “should sing to him, and show forth his salvation from day to day;” that all “kindreds of the people” should ascribe “glory and strength” unto him (vers. 23, 28, 29). They expressed, before God, their desire that his glory might be declared among the heathen (ver. 24), that all the earth should fear him (ver. 30). They evidently felt that it was right and due that anthems of praise should be sung to Jehovah by every lip, that before him every knee should bow.

III. THE HEATHEN AS THE FUTURE INHERITANCE OF GOD. In their higher moods and more exalted hours, they looked forward to the time when all the world should be subject to the Divine sway. How far this grand hope took possession of the popular mind we cannot tell, but it was not beyond the reach of those who thought the most and saw the furthest (vers. 31—35). All inanimate creation was invoked to rejoice, because the Lord was coming to judge the earth, because the good and merciful One (ver. 34) was to reign over all the nations (ver. 31). It is for us: 1. To rejoice that what was only dimly foreshadowed to them is clearly revealed to us. We have a clear vision of the blessed and glorious time when “Jesus shall reign where’er the sun,” etc. 2. To rejoice that God’s gracious purpose is being fulfilled before our eyes. All nations *are coming* and worshipping, etc. (Ps. lxxxvi. 9). 3. To do our part in our

generation towards the blissful consummation. God has committed unto us the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. v. 19).—C.

Ver. 29.—*The right, the acceptable, and the beautiful thing.* Why should we worship God? “Wherewithal shall we come before the Lord?” How shall we honour and please him? These are three questions to which our text will suggest replies. We are reminded—

I. THAT TO REVERENCE GOD IS THE ONE RIGHT THING FOR US TO DO. There are many things which it is well, proper, right, for us to do; things which make for the well-being of others; things which contribute to our own ennoblement and self-respect. But the thing which, above all others, it is right for us to do is to revere and honour God, to “give unto the Lord the glory due to his Name.” That which is due to our kindred and friends, that which is due to ourselves,—this is as nothing compared with the reverence, obedience, and submission which are due to him from whom we come, without whose creative energy we had not been, without whose sustaining power we should cease to be, “in whom we live, and move, and have our being,” to whom we owe everything we are and have. To serve God is to secure ourselves against the worst evils; it is to avail ourselves of our highest privilege; it is also, and foremost of all, to discharge our deepest obligation; it is to render that which is due indeed.

II. THAT TO BRING TO GOD OUR CONTRIBUTION MAY BE AN ACCEPTABLE THING TO DO. “Bring an offering, and come before him.” It is true that he “needeth nothing” at our hand; that “if he were hungry he would not tell us;” that “every beast of the forest is his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills” (Ps. l.). It is also true that there were conditions under which God was “pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering” (Ps. li. 19). And it is also true that the Divine Lord who sits over against the treasury is pleased with the two mites which the widow gives of her poverty. We may “bring an offering” now that may be very large and “munificent” in the sight of men, which shall be very lightly esteemed, or even weigh nothing or less than nothing, in the sight of the holy and the pure One. But then we may “bring an offering” that may be very small in man’s reckoning, which, laid by the hand of love on the altar, shall weigh much in the balances of heaven.

III. THAT TO WORSHIP GOD MAY BE A BEAUTIFUL THING TO DO. “Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” That which is called Divine worship may be an altogether unbeautiful thing in his sight. That which is rendered carelessly, slovenly, thoughtlessly, stiffly, heartlessly, or hypocritically, is utterly unbeautiful before him. But there is worship of another kind. We render our service in the beauty of holiness when: 1. From a pure desire to give to God our best, we worship him most tastefully. When, thus prompted and with this aim in view, we erect for his worship the costly and beautiful building, we sing his praise with perfected harmony, we read his word and preach his truth with cultured carefulness. 2. We bring to his worship the most excellent and requisite graces—humility, faith, docility, gratitude, adoration, generosity, consecration of spirit. Then, when clothed upon with these beautiful garments of the soul, do we most truly “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”—C.

Ver. 1.—*The ark and the tabernacle.* “So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God.” The incident of Uzza has distracted the attention due to the return of the ark. The preacher has laboured to justify the ways of God to men; has expounded the sanctity attaching to the ark as the immediate throne of God, the strict injunctions as to its removal, its covering, its Levitical bearers, and the strictness with which access to it was limited to the high priest alone once a year, and shown that during its sojourn in Abinadab’s house, familiarity had permitted a lighter and less reverent regard to possess those about it. So that when it was brought back it was in a right spirit, but in a wrong way. This irreverence found its penalty in the death of Uzza; but finding God’s blessing rested on the house of Obed-edom, David resumes the purpose he had framed of bringing the ark to Jerusalem. This event is not sufficiently considered. We are apt to imagine that from Moses to Solomon there was a continuous identity of service and of sanctuary; that the expressions which we read in the psalms of devotion to the tabernacles of God had been the habitual expres-

sions of God's people for centuries; whereas it is far otherwise. It is probable that never, till the reign of Hezekiah, was the sacrificial service of God confined to one sacred spot. Samuel sacrificed at Ramah; David, on the threshing-floor of Araunah; Solomon, at Gibeon; others at Carmel, Beersheba, Bethel. The true worship of the true God finding many centres when the Law of Moses contemplated it should have but one, the later historian, imbued with stricter sentiments of a later day, brings it as a fault against almost all the good kings of Judah, that, though they abolished all idolatry, "nevertheless the high places were not taken away;" but our text brings us face to face with something more striking than this multiplication of centres of sacrifice. It reminds us that, *for a space of about a hundred years, the ark of God and the tabernacle of God, which God had joined together, had been put asunder.* Never since the ark was taken by the Philistines in Samuel's boyhood, had it returned to the tabernacle. It rests in Beth-shemesh for a few months, then for nearly a hundred years in Kirjath-jearim, in the house of Abinadab. During all the time of Samuel we hear very little of the tabernacle at Shiloh, and, I think, nothing of the ark. In Saul's reign the tabernacle is at Nob, and still the ark is separated. The ark, God's earthly throne, the holiest centre of all Mosaic worship, had no tabernacle, with its altars and its regular service. The tabernacle had its altars of burnt and of peace offerings, but no presence within the veil. It was a first court without a second; a staircase which seemed to lead nowhere. So that for a hundred years the tabernacle worship was cut in two—here altars, there ark. Perhaps one may almost say, cut in *three* during part of this period; for the high priest came with his ephod, and lived with David. So that the priesthood with its service stood thus: Abiathar, with his ephod, "inquiring of God," kept company with David; some of the priestly families repaired to Nob after the massacre of the three hundred priests by Saul, and there offered the appointed sacrifices; while at Kirjath-jearim was the ark, in charge of a Levitical family, "neglected in the days of Saul," but doubtless sought by individual worshippers. To make the confusion more complete, Samuel, David, Solomon, all sacrifice where is neither ark nor tabernacle, and when David brings the ark to Jerusalem, he builds a new tabernacle to receive it, with its proper arrangement of altars, while still leaving the old one at Nob, to continue for some time longer (until the reign of Solomon), on its own lines, its series of sacrifices and worship. I do not bring this state of confusion forward to justify it, or suggest that all the ordering of God's house, concerning which so many minutest precepts had been given, were unimportant and superfluous. It was undoubtedly a vast gain to all subsequent generations when, in Zion, the tabernacle of God rose supreme above all other places honoured by his worship. It was a still grander service when all the high places where sacrifice had been offered were destroyed. It was fitting that the one God should have one earthly throne, everywhere accessible, but in one place revealed. The one temple rendered something of the same sort of service that the one Bible did in later times; it kept "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." But while, as we shall see, the centering of all sacrificial worship in one spot rendered grand service, yet it is well to contemplate the state of external confusion registered in the facts *thus* brought before us, and endeavour to learn their lessons. What are these?

I. First of all obviously, there is this: **THAT THE EXTERNAL ORDERING OF GOD'S HOUSE NEVER REALIZES ITS IDEAL.** As elsewhere, so here. The ideal and the real go not hand-in-hand. The most that reality can say is, "I follow after, if that I may attain." The letter of the holiest and wisest law never gets complete accomplishment. The very generation to which the Law of Sinai was given neglected one of most important sacraments, circumcision, through all the wilderness journey between Egypt and Canaan. Somehow the very eminence of judges and prophets made, for centuries, God's tabernacle at Shiloh play an inconspicuous part in the history of the nation. In the instance of our text the tabernacle is really cut in two, and the holy place is at Nob, while the holy of holies is miles away at Kirjath-jearim. Solomon's temple was hardly consecrated before it was desecrated by the neighbourhood of idolatrous temples in Jerusalem itself. The secession of the ten tribes deprived them of any temple services, save the irregular ones instituted by Jeroboam. There is always something missing, or something crooked, in the external institutions of religion. The Lord's Supper at Corinth is desecrated by selfish conviviality, even in Paul's lifetime; and

some disciples had been baptized who did not so much as know there was a Holy Ghost. When the Church went in for more order, the lack of the power and the charity of earlier times became more conspicuous. Churches that have retained more of external unity have lacked vitality; and Christian communities which have been marked by great vitality have lacked unity of charity and action. In Tertullian's days the Church almost entirely lost the use of the sacrament of baptism by men postponing the observance of it to life's end, fearing there was no further or other washing away of sins after it had taken place. To-day she has almost entirely lost the use of the same sacrament by applying it at life's beginning to those absolutely unconscious of its meaning. God is always amongst us, but not always the ark, the sacraments, the proper order. Reality is rough—never more than a mere approximation to what we desire. And if so, there should be charity for differences, and we should address ourselves rather to the maintenance of "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

II. The second lesson to be learned is: **GOD MAKES THE MOST OF ALL THAT IS IMPERFECT, AND MAKES THE BEST OF WHAT IS WRONG.** In what utter hopelessness would the religious state of Israel have appeared to any ancient High Churchman! The altars without the ark; the ark without the altars; no high priest with the ark. All the suggestion of Divine mercy on the one hand and Divine lordship on the other, which the ark suggested, lost. Both in places undistinguished. It was, for the time, an utter collapse of the entire system of sacrificial worship as instituted by Moses. And in these circumstances what do we witness? The utter disappearance of faith and godliness? Far from it. True, there was a general coldness, or such a state of things would not have been permitted to endure. But God did not abandon his people because ark and altar were separate. The same love which ordained all these arrangements for high, united, solemn fellowship with himself, bent its energies to supply the void caused by their neglect in some other way. Is the ark taken and the priesthood degenerate? God raises up Samuel the prophet. Are altars and tabernacles neglected because weak through separateness? God comes near, and, through Abiathar, Gad, Nathan, and other prophets, makes up for the lack of priestly service. Has he virtually no outward dwelling? He comes nearer to individual souls, and woos them with the mystic voice which the sheep hear and gladly follow; so that faith, service, goodness, are all found. There are probably about seventy psalms written by David, most of them in the first half of the psalter. Many of these, written after the ark had found a new dwelling in Jerusalem, breathe a profoundly spiritual attachment to "the house of God." But the greater part of them, written prior to that event, are altogether void of allusion to either tabernacle or altar; but, like the rest, rich in devoutest recognition of the nearness, preciousness, and help of God. An old Catholic theologian supposed that, just as in the absence of rain, the usual means of fertility, there was a "mist that came up and watered Eden," similarly, in the absence of all usual means of grace, God invents fresh methods by which he reaches and refreshes the hearts of men; even so, amidst the cold and unspiritual half-century that intervened between the death of Samuel and the establishment of the ark in Jerusalem, there were still all the Divine activities going on; and the devout found in "the Law" what they missed in "the service." And God waked many, many hearts to seek after him. In this lesson also there is vast importance. We are too apt to say a blessing is impossible unless such and such arrangements are made. Some said in olden times, "Where the Church is the Spirit is; and outside the Church is no salvation." Some in modern times hold sacraments essential to salvation. Some with more reason, but still going beyond Scripture, think Jesus can only save those who know his history. God works the more to bless us, the more through our ignorance we frustrate his means of grace. If through presumptuousness we neglect any duty, it is a sin which he will sternly correct; but if through ignorance we neglect any duty, God will try and make up our loss. The evangelical Churches of to-day have mostly, I think, lost a sacrament. God makes the other sacrament do double duty, and loads it with double blessings.

III. **THE EXTERNAL ORDERING OF GOD'S HOUSE IN GOD'S WAY CARRIES WITH IT A GREAT BLESSING.** David was Israel's second Moses. He rehabilitated the whole tabernacle service with its solemn united access to God; helped the people to unite in approaching God, by bringing priests, ark, and altar under one tabernacle. He did

more; arranging for the services of the sanctuary, he gave a liturgy for the closet. While in the sacrifices men found the proper form for approaching God, in the psalter they caught the proper spirit. In my judgment the stronger grip that Judah took of the Law of God than Israel; her greater wealth in saintly kings and prophets; her unity; her power to learn the sweet uses of adversity; her recurrence after the Captivity to a purer and more ardent service of God than she had ever reached before; her grander service to mankind; her endurance in national existence till the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; the strange persistence that has marked the children of Judah from that day to this; all were due in a great degree to the tabernacle of David, the temple of Solomon, the temple of Ezra. From the hour when the ark rested in Zion, Zion was the sacred centre of the land, the source of holy influences binding men to God and to one another. Was it only external arrangements that David made? And is it only an external arrangement that he makes who builds a chapel, or ~~erects~~ a school; or helps men to come together unitedly to observe God's sacraments and learn his ways? David, who knew more of private communion with God than any of us, said, "One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Let there be no latitudinarianism, the poor substitute for true charity. If we can help to give back to the Church of Christ a lost sacrament, a neglected truth, a means of freer fellowship with one another and with God, we do something on which the blessing of God will rest, and from which the good of man will flow.—G.

Vers. 1—43.—*David's thanksgiving psalm.* After having brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom and set it in the tent that David had made for it, there was a general offering of sacrifices by David and the congregation as thank offerings to the Lord, and David blessed the people. Of these thank offerings he ordered that certain portions should be given to every man and woman in Israel—"a loaf of bread, a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine." Having done this, he set in order the service of the Levites in the holy tent on Zion. "Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the Lord into the hand of Asaph and his brethren." The meaning of this passage is that David committed to Asaph the carrying out of the service of song; that liturgical singing was then to be introduced. This beautiful psalm was doubtless composed by David himself for liturgical song in the public worship. The first half of the psalm (vers. 8—22) recurs in Ps. cv. 1—15; the second half (vers. 23—33) in Ps. xcvi.; and the conclusion (vers. 34—36) in Ps. cxi. 1, 47, 48. There is a swelling ascription throughout the psalm, commencing with ver. 8. From that verse down to the end of ver. 22 the call is to Israel to praise the Lord. From ver. 23 to ver. 29 the call is to the heathen or Gentile nations to praise the Lord. From ver. 30 to ver. 34 the call is to the whole earth and to inanimate nature to praise him. Ver. 35 seems a prophetic anticipation which David commands to take the form of a prayer that the time may soon come when God's ancient people shall be gathered to their own land, and when the Church of God redeemed from among men shall assemble round his throne throughout eternity to praise his holy Name. Then the earthly people of God, having accepted the Lord Jesus as their Messiah, and the Church of Christ gathered to him at his coming, shall sing their hallelujahs of praise, and the glory of the Lord fill heaven and earth.—W.

Vers. 1—3.—*Signs of entire consecration.* When the ark was safely placed within the curtains of David's new tabernacle on Mount Zion, and the fact of God's dwelling with his people was freshly impressed by the permanent presence of his symbol, it was fitting that, in some most solemn and expressive way, the full consecration of the people to the service of Jehovah should be declared. For this purpose special burnt offerings and peace offerings were presented. The special features of these two kinds of offering may be indicated so as to bring out their particular adaptation to the circumstances of the day. The victim, in the case of the "burnt offering," might be any kind of animal fit for sacrifices, but it must be a male. And it must be wholly offered, and burnt with fire. Kurtz says that this "burning by fire" marked it as an expression of perpetual obligation to complete, sanctified self-surrender to Jehovah. This kind

of offering embodied the *general idea* of sacrifice, and in a sense represented the whole sacrificial institute. "The peace offering" was presented upon the acceptance of any special Divine mercies, and portions of the victim were restored to the offerer, who, with his family and friends, feasted on them. "This sacrificial feast was peculiar to the peace offerings, and indicated that the atonement was complete, that the sin was covered and cancelled which had separated the offerer from Jehovah, who now welcomed him to his table, and in this meal gave him a pledge of reconciliation" and acceptance. So the two offerings, together with the subsequent feast, signified thankful recognition of God's mercies, entire consecration to God's service, and a happy realization of God's acceptance. These were precisely suitable to the occasion of the restoration of the ark.

I. **ONE THING IS RIGHT FOR MAN—TO BE WHOLLY God's.** Right because of the Divine *relations*; right because of the Divine *claims*; and right because of the Divine *mercies*. Our Lord expressed the duty of man in a brief sentence, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength*."

II. **THIS MAN MAY FITTINGLY DECLARE IN A SOLEMN PUBLIC ACT.** Because, in his love and loyalty to God, he should wish to influence others by his own consecration. A man may not keep his religious life to himself; he is responsible to God for making it a gracious persuasion and power upon others. Press the duty of the public modes of expressing our dedication to God, such as "confirmation" and "joining the Church." Such acts of public consecration may be wisely and helpfully renewed on special occasions. Illustrate by such a public acknowledgment of God as was made at the "thanksgiving" for the recovery of the Prince of Wales. That was, for this Christian age, just such a scene as David's offering of burnt and peace offerings.

III. **IN OLDEN TIMES THE APPROPRIATE ACT WAS OFFERING A BURNT OFFERING.** In it the sacrificer consecrated to the Deity alone the enjoyment of the whole victim, and it represented the full and complete surrender of the man himself to God. It was called the whole burnt offering, or *perfect sacrifice*, because the whole creature was as it were sent up to God on the wings of fire. It signified that the offerer belonged wholly to God, and that he dedicated himself soul and body to him, and placed his life at his disposal.

IV. **SUCH AN OFFERING WAS RIGHTLY MADE EVERY DAY.** At the morning and evening services; and the offering was doubled on the sabbath (Exod. xxix. 38-44; Lev. vi. 9-13). "Every morning and evening a lamb was sacrificed, with its usual meat and drink offering, as a burnt offering on behalf of the whole covenant people, and the evening victim was to be so slowly consumed that it might last till the morning, an expressive symbol of that continual self-dedication to God, which is the duty of man."

V. **SUCH OFFERINGS WERE RENEWED ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS.** These were (1) at the new moon, (2) the three great festivals, (3) the great Day of Atonement, and (4) the Feast of Trumpets. On every great national occasion a solemn public reassertion of the nation's full consecration to God was made by means of the burnt offering. For us such offerings are appropriate at the new year, birthdays, etc.

VI. **SUCH OFFERINGS MIGHT BE REPRESENTATIVE, AND OFFERED IN THE NAME AND ON THE BEHALF OF OTHERS.** As was the case with Job's offerings for his children, and in some degree with David's offerings on this occasion. This point leads on to dealing with the Lord Jesus Christ as our great Burnt Offering, which we make ours by faith, and present to God as the solemn pledge that our "whole selves we dedicate to him," and hold as his. "Every such sacrifice was a type of the perfect offering made by Christ, on behalf of the race of man, of his human nature and will to the will of the Father." Compare St. Paul's pleadings, "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—R. T.

Vers. 8-10.—*The duty of praise.* David calls upon the people, as a matter of solemn duty, to "give thanks unto the Lord . . . and sing psalms unto him." Dr. Goulburn well says, "Praise is the religious exercise—the one religious exercise—of heaven. Angels are offering it ceaselessly, resting not night or day. Saints are offering it ceaselessly in paradise. Nature in her every district is offering it ceaselessly. From the heavens, which declare the glory of God, and the firmament which showeth his handiwork, down to the dew-drop which sparkles with the colours of the rainbow, and

the lark, who tunes his cheerful carol as he salutes the rising sun, the whole creation sends up one grand chorus of praise to the throne of God." The sincere heart will ever feel disposed to sing—

"I'll praise my Maker with my breath;
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers;
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, or thought, or being last,
Or immortality endures."

I. PRAISE IS DUE TO GOD. "For his mercy endureth for ever." Recall the reasons for praise each man can find, and each nation, especially noting those which are associated with religion, and illustrated in the connections of this passage.

II. PRAISE IS REQUIRED BY GOD. As the fitting mode of expressing our feeling towards him and our sense of what he *is* and *does*. His own declaration is, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me."

III. PRAISE IS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. It is to him as "sweet-smelling incense." It is the sacrifice he most desires.

IV. PRAISE IS SERVICEABLE TO GOD. It is a gracious influence. It draws forth right feeling in men. The praise of one calls out the praise of many, and so aids in carrying on God's purpose in the blessing of men.

These points sufficiently suggest of themselves lines of treatment, and scarcely need further elaboration. But it may be well to discuss the question how far our praise must needs be intelligent—shaped, that is into forms that our minds can distinctly grasp and fully follow. Cannot sound—music without words—by its tone and character find adequate utterance for soul-emotion? Illustrate by the power of music to express varying emotion. A great musical composer gives us 'Songs without Words.' On this point the following passage from a sermon of the great Florentine preacher, Savonarola, may be suggestive. It refers directly to *prayer*, but it is equally applicable to *praise*:—"In prayer, a man may be attending to the words, and this is a thing of a wholly material nature; he may be attending to the sense of the words, and this is rather study than prayer; and lastly, his whole thoughts may be directed to God, and this alone is true prayer. It is unnecessary to be considering either sentences or language—the mind must be elevated above self, and must be wholly absorbed in the thought of God. Arrived at this state, the true believer forgets the world and its wants; he has attained almost a foreshadow of celestial happiness. To this state of elevation the ignorant may arrive as easily as the learned. It even frequently happens that he who repeats a psalm without understanding its words utters a much more holy prayer than the learned man who can explain its meaning. Words, in fact, are not indispensable to an act of prayer: when a man is truly rapt in the spirit an uttered prayer becomes rather an impediment, and ought to yield to that which is wholly mental. Thus it will be seen how great a mistake those commit who prescribe a fixed number of prayers. God does not delight in a multitude of words, but in a fervent spirit." Apply to the difficulty often felt in mentally following the words and truths and figures of our hymns, and show how true praise is not dependent on precise mental apprehensions. Also carefully impress that private acts of praise, however numerous, orderly, or sincere, can never relieve a man from the duty of joining in the praises of the great congregation.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—God's strength and God's face. We are bidden, in seeking the Lord, to seek both his *strength* and his *face*; and these two are set in such a connection of parallel sentences that we may assume them to be differing expressions for the same thing, though each helps to throw light on the other. The uses of the terms in the Book of Psalms need careful study. In this passage God's strength is thought of as having been illustrated in the successful bringing back of the ark; but that event was quite as fully a proof of the Divine *favour*—it indicated that God's *face* was turned smilingly towards both the king and the people. Such experiences of God's "strength" and "face" should establish the permanent resolve to seek that "strength" and "face" in all the more ordinary scenes in the life of the individual and the nation. For

“strength,” comp. 1 Sam. xv. 29; Ps. xxvii. 1; xxix. 1; Job ix. 19; Ps. xlvi. 1; lxii. 11; lxviii. 34; lxxiii. 26, etc.; Isa. xxvi. 4; xlvi. 24. For “face,” comp. Ps. xxxi. 16; lxvii. 1, etc.

I. GOD'S STRENGTH STRENGTHENETH MAN. Open and explain that man's physical energy depends upon his *vital force*, and his religious life upon his *spiritual force*. God has access to these secret sources, and can renew them with his own vitality. He “strengtheneth us with strength in our soul.” He makes “all grace abound, so that we may have all-sufficiency in all things.” The experience of the religious life unfolds the marvellous adaptations and fitnesses of Divine grace to the thousandfold needs that arise. No matter what may be our circumstances of perplexity and difficulty, there is always strength for us in God. It may come as an efficient help for bearing actual life-burdens, or for doing actual life-duties; and we should undertake none without prayerfully seeking to lay hold of the Divine strength. How it can be perfect in human weakness, so that a man may be strong to bear the unusual ills, and zealous to do the unusual duties, of life, is taught us in the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, and, after him, in the example of his servant St. Paul. But we should be quite sure that it will come as an inward renewal, if it may not come for the achievement of material success. We may be “strong in the Lord and in the power of his might;” and this is the assurance of the eternal triumph, if it is not of the earthly.

II. GOD'S STRENGTH IS CONNECTED WITH GOD'S FACE. He gives his strength with a smile. The turning of his face towards us is the sign of his approval and acceptance. The influence of such a mark of Divine regard may be illustrated. 1. *It cheers and encourages.* “If God be for us, who can be against us?” 2. *It recovers us from depressions.* There can be nothing overwhelming in our circumstances if God smiles on us. We look into his face and feel that they are causing him no anxiety, and so our heads are lifted up. He can make “ways in seas and paths in great waters.” 3. *It renews our fervour and zeal.* The smile tells of such love that we feel we can do or bear anything for his sake. 4. *It glorifies the right;* for it is only on that God ever smiles. He approves the *good*, but turns away from the *evil*. And that must ever seem to us to be the most beautiful on which God's smiling face can rest.

Press, in conclusion, how the *promises* assure us that just these two things, or, better, this two-sided thing, God's strength and face, he is ever ready to give to those who with true hearts wait upon him. Those promises in effect say, “I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee.” And the uplifted smile says, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.”—R. T.

Vers. 12—14.—*The contents of a godly memory.* “Remember, recall the records of Divine dealings; set afresh before your minds your own personal experiences of the Divine goodness and mercy.” The conception of the “solidarity of the race” is matched by that of the essential unity of the race, in its mental and spiritual experiences, throughout all the ages. Really to know God's dealings with any one people is to know his dealings with *all* peoples. And therefore the story of his relations with the Jews is so minutely recorded, and so graciously preserved for us on whom the “ends of the world are come.” And yet, further, it may be shown that an individual experience really affords the race-type. God is essentially to each what he is to all. We too often fix our attention on the changeable accidents of a man's career, and then think that his experience is unique. If it were so it were of little use to keep any record of the Divine dealings with men, for one man's experience could not help another. What, then, are the usual contents of the godly memory? We can only deal with such as are suggested by the terms of the verses before us.

I. IT HOLDS ITS OWN PERSONAL MEMORIES OF GOD'S GOODNESS. Not merely has the godly man a general belief in God and God's merciful ways, but he has the assurance that God has been merciful to *him*. He can see in page after page of his life's story how guidance, restraint, comfort, teaching, and strength have come in precise adaptations to his own conditions and needs. He can speak of the “good hand of his God which has ever been upon him for good.” The importance of fixing the memory of God's dealings by *pious attention* to them at the time, and by frequent review of them afterwards, should be pointed out. A richly stored memory becomes an unfailing well-spring of comfort in later life. To our view all our past should be dotted over with pillars we

have raised, on which we have inscribed our “Ebenezer”—“Hitherto the Lord hath helped us;” and at any time we should be able to look back and bid these pillars remind us of the “wonderful works that he hath done.”

II. IT HOLDS THE RACE-MEMORIALS OF GOD'S GOODNESS. Scripture tells us of God's dealings with men, both before he separated the Jewish people and while he had them under his special leadings. “The God of the whole earth shall he be called.” It is characteristic of David's psalms that they are full of large broad thoughts of God's relations to the whole world. And both Scripture and secular history should provide us with stores for the memory, as they reveal God's workings towards his gracious ends of substantial and eternal good. If Israel may say, “He is the Lord our God,” it must go on to say, “His judgments are in all the earth.”

III. IT HOLDS THE COVENANT PEOPLE'S MEMORIALS OF GOD'S GOODNESS. This is the peculiar treasure of the godly. We have the Bible records of the covenant race—God's peculiar people, whom he had chosen for himself. Show what a large portion of the good man's memory is taken up with the Scripture story of Israel. God's ways with his covenant people are to us the model and example of all his dealings, and upon these we argue what he is and will be in his ways with us. But they are wonderful ways, marvellous works; often mysterious, often severe; ways of judgment as well as mercy.

Impress that the use of due occasions for considering the contents of the memory, for refreshing the memory, and for making new grounds of praise and trust, is a most important, but often neglected, part of Christian duty, bearing direct relation to Christian strength and joy.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Abiding thoughts of the covenant.* Comparing the first clause of this verse with the answering clause in Ps. cv. 8, it would seem that it is rather a statement concerning God than a counsel given to man; and it may be rendered, “He hath remembered,” or “He hath been mindful always of his covenant.” But man may very properly be urged to keep God's covenant ever in mind, on the very ground that God himself, in Divine faithfulness, keeps it ever before him. We may dwell on the *moral influence* exerted by cherishing thoughts of those covenant conditions under which God has been graciously pleased to set us. Explanations should be given of the Adamic covenant, or covenant of creation; the patriarchal covenant, renewed again and again in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the Mosaic covenant, solemnly accepted by God and the people at Sinai, and made the condition of the national prosperity; and the Christian covenant, pledged for all believers in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It should be shown how fully the Mosaic covenant became interwoven with Jewish thought; and how, by fresh and arousing incidents, the claims of the covenant were renewed; and also how, to the more devout Jewish mind, that covenant was glorified. The following points will be suggestive. It is morally helpful to keep before us—

I. THE HONOUR OF BEING IN THE DIVINE COVENANT. All accesses to God are honourable. Compare our estimate of the honour of presentation to an earthly sovereign, and our sense of the yet higher honour of coming into direct relations of friendship and service with him. Illustrate by Abraham's oppressed feeling at the honour of close communion with the Lord and permission to intercede for Sodom, or by the surprised feeling of St. Paul when he thinks of himself as being a co-worker together with God. This “honour” exercises a moral influence on us especially in this, that it *inspires us to be our best.* It makes us feel, “What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?”

II. THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING IN THE DIVINE COVENANT. For we must be favoured above others; and if we are right-minded, all signs of special favour and regard bow us down in *humility*, as they did David, leading him to say, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him?” Seeing that there is “no respect of persons with God,” it is necessary that we should keep from associating *favouritism* with his dealings. If he brings some—a few—under a special covenant, it is only for the service of the many, and with a view to the final blessing of the *whole* through them. So the sense of “privilege” should always be associated with the “humility” of the true servant; and we remember the covenant that we may be ever kept humble under God's gracious hand.

III. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING IN THE DIVINE COVENANT. For it involves

solemn pledges bearing relation to the (1) *maintenance of a high character*; (2) *rendering of a pure witness*; and (3) *doing an earnest work*. These may be set forth in both their Jewish and their Christian phases. The sense of responsibility has this moral influence—it cultures earnestness and diligence, and it arouses the whole powers to the attainment of "faithfulness."

IV. THE REWARDS OF BEING IN THE DIVINE COVENANT. Those rewards come in the fulfilment of the promises attached to the covenant. In the Jewish case they concerned material good, national peace and prosperity. In the Christian case they concern moral and spiritual blessings, with earthly good conditioned upon the Divine wisdom and will. Rewards have this moral influence—they brighten, cheer, and encourage those who may be in the midst of toil and trouble.

In each of the above it may be shown how the sense of covenant-relations is corrective of the precise forms of worldly influence to which we are subject. And, in conclusion, we may dwell upon the holy rest of the thought that *God himself* is in pledged and holy covenant with us in Christ Jesus.—R. T.

Vers. 23-25.—*Christian joy a witness.* These verses reappear in Ps. xcvi. In that psalm the sacred nation is charged to praise Jehovah, and to spread the good tidings in all places. Such praise is fitting, seeing that all other deities are nothing, and Jehovah is God alone. Calvin, writing on this psalm, says, "It is an exhortation to praise God, addressed not to the Jews only, but to all nations. Whence we infer that the psalm refers to the kingdom of Christ; for till he was revealed to the world his Name could not be called upon anywhere but in Judea." It is said that when the sun is going out of sight the pious Swiss herdsman of the Alps takes his Alpine horn and shouts loudly through it, "Praise ye the Lord." Then a brother herdsman on some distant slope takes up the echo, "Praise ye the Lord." Soon another answers, still higher up the mountains, till hill shouts to hill, and peak answers to peak, the sublime anthem of praise to the Lord of all. Characteristic of the psalmist is *joy in God*: and in this he is the one great Scripture example; Isaiah, perhaps, coming next after him, and St. Paul having much of the same feature marking even his toilsome and suffering life. Joy, as an element of religious life, must in part depend on: 1. *Disposition.* Some are of sanguine and hopeful, others of desponding, disposition. Some can easily turn everything into song, while others can never get beyond stern prose. We are not responsible for our natural dispositions, but we are for their due modification, harmony, and culture. Often latent and unsuspected faculties can be developed, and it is seldom wise to excuse failure and shortcoming on the ground of "human nature." 2. *Poetical faculty.* Where this is given joy and song would seem to be easy; yet, on the other side, it may be said that poets are often sad-toned men, probably because accompanying the poetical faculty is a power of *insight* which brings to the poet's eye the wrong that lies at the heart of so much that is seemingly good. But this cannot apply to thoughts and views of *God*. Insight and faculty can only find reasons for joy and song when they have to do with *him* and his all-merciful ways. 3. *Youthful piety.* Those who seek God *early*, as David did, usually have a brightness and gladness and joy of full trust on their whole religious lives which the later-renewed can never reach. This is one of the best of the rewards given to early piety. 4. *Earnest soul-culture.* This, by leading to renewals of trust, to firmer hold of revealed truth, and to deeper experiences of Divine communion, bears directly upon the *joy side* of Christian feeling. When attained, Christian joy becomes a witness for two reasons or in two ways.

I. IT MEETS THE COMMON SENTIMENT THAT A THING MUST BE GOOD IN ITSELF IF IT TENDS TO MAKE US BRIGHT AND HAPPY. How common this sentiment is may be shown from ordinary life. The *people* who always cheer us, we feel sure, must be good people, and the same may be said of *books*, etc. In this way, therefore, our personal joy in God may become a gracious moral power on all who are around us. And *happy Christians* have a most noble and blessed witness.

"Sing on your heavenward way,
Ye ransomed sinners, sing."

A weary world sadly needs the sweet relief and cheering of much Christian song.

II. IT SETS CHRISTIANITY IN A DISTINCT AND IMPRESSIVE CONTRAST WITH ALL OTHER

RELIGIONS. They are familiar enough with the sentiment of *fear*. In perilous rebounds they know seasons of intense sensual excitement, which caricature true *joy*. But the prevailing tone of all other religions besides Christianity is sad. Only the Christian may “abound in joy through the Holy Ghost.” Who could sing before that Athenian altar whereon was inscribed, “To the unknown God”? And who could fail to sing and give praise, that might look into the face of the Father of Jesus, and say, “This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our Guide even unto death”?—R. T.

Ver. 29.—Sincerity and fervour in worship shown by gifts. In accordance with the Mosaic regulations, and as a fitting expression of pious feeling, the people were enjoined to “bring an offering, and come before him.” By an “offering” here we are to understand a *gift* rather than a sacrifice (see Mal. ii. 8—10). From the very earliest beginnings of the human race it was distinctly apprehended—whether by following the instincts with which God endowed man, or by special Divine revelations, we cannot say—that a man *can* and *may* give *himself* to God by and through the presentation to God of something *that he has*. This is the underlying principle of all tithes, offerings, and sacrifices. Nothing presented to God can be acceptable unless it carries with it the *person presenting*, seeing that what he cares for is *man's love and trust and service*. Illustrate from the case of Cain and Abel, each bringing a thank offering from that in which God had blessed him. Show how the principle gained development in the Mosaic system; the regular devotement of property being enjoined, and gifts being required in connection with all sanctuary attendances. Show that the principle has our Lord's commendation, and passed over into the early Church, forming one of the first impulses of awakened Christian feeling (see Barnabas), and being specially commanded to the attention of the Churches by the apostles (Acts ii. 45; Gal. ii. 10; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2). It may be enforced—

I. **THAT CHRISTIAN FEELING STILL IMPELS GIFTS.** The sense of *indebtedness* and of *thankfulness* always wants this mode of expression.

II. **THAT CHRISTIAN FEELING STILL SEEKS RIGHT SPHERES FOR GIFTS.** These are found in every age in connection with Divine worship. And as Christ is not now with us in the *body*, we find spheres for gifts in helping and blessing others for his sake.

III. **THAT CHRISTIAN FEELING STILL SEEKS TO SERVE GOD BY ITS GIFTS.** Letting them be (1) *signs* to him, and (2) inspiring *examples* to our fellow-men.

Press the duty of seeking right ideas concerning the *trust of money*, and the due *apportionment* of it so that God may be glorified in its use.—R. T.

Ver. 29.—The claims of God to the worship and homage of his creatures. What I have to demonstrate is: 1. That God is entitled to the homage of his creatures, and claims it as proper and right. 2. That these claims are made upon *us*, his intelligent creatures. It will therefore be necessary to show that we are capable of knowing God to all the extent necessary to excite in our minds the feelings of awe, reverence, and admiration, since these are essential to homage and worship. Also to prove that such claims are not only reasonable, but founded in justice and right. 3. That the worship and homage required is such that it not only does not degrade, but elevates the man that pays it; that it is not the hard requirement of despotism, but the righteous claim of infinite excellence; not the service of flattery and servility, but the free-will offering of a discerning and admiring mind (J. Robinson).—R. T.

Ver. 29.—The clothing of true worshippers. The expression “in the beauty of holiness” is rendered in the Septuagint Version, “in his sanctuary;” and by the Syriac Version, “with reverence and thanksgiving.” A similar expression is found in 2 Chron. xx. 21, “That should praise the beauty of holiness;” this is translated by Bertheau, “in holy attire;” and by Malvenda, “Praise the Lord with the same costume, and dignity, and magnificence, as in the temple.” The term “beauty of holiness” may be regarded as including inward devotion, and also with outward reverence. Jennings and Lowe, in their note on Ps. xvi. 9, translate, “in holy vestments;” and they quote a passage in Ecclus. l. 11, where it is said that Simon the high priest “put on the robe of honour, and . . . made the *garment* of the sanctuary

honourable." For man external forms of worship are necessary, but in his relations to them there is a constant peril of formality, and so a constant need for a watchful and careful culture of the spiritual life and feeling which alone can make forms acceptable. Illustrate the danger of formality by the Jewish wearing of the tallith, etc., and by exaggerated rabbinical regulations. Note with what constant anxiety our Lord taught that they who "worship the Father must worship him in spirit and in truth." Holiness, as here used, has no precise equivalent. It includes "sincerity," and also "reverence," but it should be thought of as embracing "whole-heartedness" and "devout earnestness" and "spiritual preparedness." The term may be suggestively compared with the "integrity" of David and the "perfect" of the New Testament. The worship-clothing which is expressed in the term "beauty of holiness" may be treated as including (1) humility; (2) reverence; (3) sincerity; (4) earnestness; (5) preparedness; (6) and openness to receive. If the Christian Church is a "kingdom of priests," a "holy priesthood," then we should be devoutly anxious to secure the priestly clothing for our high and noble *spiritual worship*.—R. T.

Ver. 31.—God's present reign. "The Lord reigneth," or "Jehovah is king." David saw, in the restoration of the ark, a new and solemn resumption of his direct government by Jehovah; and of this glorious fact he bids the people make acknowledgment and render witness. Explain fully the Jewish conception of the theocracy, and show how it was connected with a present and abiding outward symbol—at first the pillar-cloud, and then the ark. The importance of the theocratic idea, and the actual influence of it on mind and heart, depended on the differing religious dispositions of the people. To the worldly minded Jew it would be a vague notion, a sort of sublime, but impractical, philosophical conception—a sort of hereditary national sentiment, and nothing more. To the truly spiritually minded man it was the first, most impressive, and most practical of all truths. It was the thought that put glorious meaning into commonplace life and labour. Life has its holy issues, and it might well have its shrouded mysteries, for "the Lord reigneth." This Jewish notion passes over into Christianity, and we realize Jehovah's present spiritual reign in the administration of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Maccabean times there was a tendency to lose the idea that "the Lord doth reign," and to substitute for it a phrase which indicated a great outlook for a coming Deliverer and a golden age, "the Lord shall reign." And a similar evil tendency still affects the Christian Church; failing to realize Christ's present rule, some sections of the Church keep looking on to some fancied near time, when Christ shall come again and take to himself his great power and reign. And the antidote is full and faithful teaching on the point of which the psalmist makes so much—the present direct, and every way practical, present reign over the earth and the Church, of Jehovah, apprehended in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Keeping the present reign in Christ before our minds, it may be instructive to show—

I. THAT CHRIST'S LIFE ON EARTH HELPS OUR APPREHENSION OF THE REIGN. The reign of God the Spirit must ever seem to man an unreal, intangible thing, unless it can take some outward and material shape; and yet that shape and form must be such as will in no sense imperil the spiritual character of the reign. No merely human sovereignty could be satisfactory, for none could be worthy of that sublime royalty which it presumed to represent. Christ's life on earth was the theocracy materialized for human apprehension. Our Lord's *humanity* sets God before our thought in human terms and figures such as we can understand. And the kingship of Jesus was felt and acknowledged by friend and foe, wherever he went, and not exclusively by those disciples who knew him most intimately. His teaching was given "with authority;" his personal relations were a rule. It can be no wonder that people should cast their garments in his way, and wave palm branches, and shout, saying, "Hosanna to the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord!" His life is the earth-picture of the Divine reign over the hearts and lives of men.

II. THAT CHRIST'S GLORY IN HEAVEN MAKES US REALIZE THE REIGN AS A SPIRITUAL REIGN. It takes all the merely carnal features out of it. The reign is such a one as our exalted, glorified, ascended, spiritual Lord and Saviour may have, who is "Lord of lambs the lowly, King of saints the holy." The risen, heavenly Christ we feel must

have, as the sphere for his rule, not our bodily actions only, but our *wills*, our *choices*, our *affections*; gaining, as he must, his beginnings in our souls, and extending his holy authorities over all the relations we sustain.

Explain and impress how, in our common, everyday life, we can realize the theocratic conception, and practically live in the joy and impulse of being daily "in the great Taskmaker's eye."—R. T.

Ver. 33.—*God always coming to judge.* "Judgment" is, in Scripture, a large and comprehensive term. It is sometimes synonymous with "rule," or "government," because in ancient monarchies actual magistracy—due personal consideration and decision of rival claims, or accusations of crimes—took a prominent place. Sometimes reference is intended to that appointment of deserts in men's earthly experiences which may be regarded as a Divine judgment continually working. And sometimes the allusion is to that great occasion on which the anomalies of life are to gain permanent adjustment, and the issues of human conduct to be eternally fixed. Whatever other figures for God may gain attraction to us, we may not lose our thought of him as the "Judge of all the earth." We fix attention on the fact that the *judging* of God is no merely future thing, the glory of a coming day. It may be urged that—

I. GOD IS "EVER COMING TO JUDGE" IN THE WITNESS OF MEN'S CONSCiences. No man has to wait for his judgment. He has it at once in the inward conviction of the rightness or wrongness of his action. We should never, in our thought, separate conscience from the inward voice of God our Judge.

II. GOD IS EVER "COMING TO JUDGE" IN THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SIN AND SUFFERING. Suffering being the proper issue of sin, and necessarily connected with it by God in order to reveal its character. All suffering may be regarded as a beginning and present illustration of God's judgment.

III. GOD IS EVER "COMING TO JUDGE" IN THE CONVICTIONS WROUGHT BY THE PRESENCE AMONG US OF HOLY MEN. Illustrate how Enoch and Noah carried God's judgment on their sinful generation, in the conviction produced by their holy lives. And in the fullest sense this was true of the Lord Jesus as the holiest of men. His presence among them was God's abiding judgment on a sinful and adulterous generation. In measure the same is true still of both private and public spheres—the presence of holy men and women tests us, and, too often, both judges and condemns.

IV. GOD IS EVER "COMING TO JUDGE" IN THE ORDERING OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE. Calamities, and even disappointments, are signs of the Divine presence recognizing and dealing with wilfulness and sin. And this is quite as true when we are able to trace the natural laws according to whose legitimate workings the calamities or failures may have come.

V. GOD IS SURELY ALSO COMING WITH HIS FINAL JUDGMENT ON THE LIVES AND RECORDS OF NATIONS AND OF MEN. Of that *fact* we are well assured; of the manner and method of it we have only as yet vague poetical figures, which we are unable to translate into earthly fact. Enough is told us to make the thought of coming judgment a present moral power. David connected the Divine "judgment" with "righteousness" and with "truth," as these, he knew, had been so gloriously manifested in the fulfilment of ancient promises. "These being the characteristics of Jehovah's judgment to which the view is directed in this psalm, the essentially *joyous* tone of it is accounted for." Think aright of God's judgment, and of it we may even learn to *sing*.—R. T.

Ver. 36.—*The people's "Amen."* With this incident should be compared the public response of the people at the seasons for the renewal of the covenant (Josh. xxiv. 16—24, etc.). In the united cry of the people, when David's psalm closed, we have their acceptance of all that had been said in their behalf. The word "amen" means "firm, faithful, verily;" and the proper signification of the word is when one person confirms the word of another, and expresses his wish for the success and accomplishment of the other's vows and declarations. For Scripture use of the word, see the following representative passages:—Numb. v. 22; Deut. xxvii. 15; 1 Kings i. 36; Ps. xli. 13; cxi. 48; Jer. xxviii. 6; Matt. vi. 13; Rev. xxii. 20. The following early authorities confirm the fact that the word "Amen" was repeated aloud as a response by the Christian congregations:—Justin Martyr, A.D. 188, notices that the people present say the "Amen."

after prayer and thanksgiving. Dionysius of Alexandria, A.D. 232, speaks of one who had often listened to the thanksgiving, and joined in the "Amen" which followed. Cyril of Jerusalem, A.D. 320, says that the Lord's Prayer is sealed with an "Amen." And Jerome, A.D. 331, speaks of the thundering sound of the "Amen" of the Roman congregations. It is very interesting to note that all the hymns found in the third book of 'Chaldaean Magic' close with an Accadian word *Kakama*, which is represented in Assyrian as *amanu*, and is precisely the "Amen" with which we are accustomed to close our prayers and hymns. The word was used in the services of the synagogue. "The formula of consecration in the Holy Eucharist is in most ancient liturgies ordered to be said aloud, and the people respond aloud, Amen." "In most Greek liturgies also, when the priest in administering says, 'Soma Christou,' the receivers answer, 'Amen.' We may dwell on—

I. **THE COMMON WORSHIP.** Whenever a congregation of people gathers together for worship in connection with religious ceremonial, only some of them can take actual part by voice or by act. All may share in sympathy, interest, and common feeling. This is illustrated in David's bringing up the ark. All shared, but only a few were actually engaged in the ceremonial.

II. **THE REPRESENTATIVE VOICE** or voices, of priest or of singers, of minister or of clerk. Such voices and actors should be conceived as (1) set forth by the people to act for them; (2) understanding the wants, conditions, and feelings of the people; and (3) speaking for the people.

III. **THE GREAT AMEN.** This is to be regarded as solemnly sealing, acknowledging and accepting what has been said or done in the people's name. It is curious that it should come to be spoken by the minister, not the people.

Impress the interest (1) to God of the people's Amen; (2) to the representative speaker; and (3) to the people themselves. Show the importance of regarding it as a solemn duty to attend so fully to Divine service, that, in uttering our *Amen*, we intelligently and solemnly take what is said, or what is done, and make it *ours*—our own.

—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVII.

This chapter is paralleled by 2 Sam. vii. 1-29; and the parallel is for the most part very close. The purport of the two accounts may be said to be identical, while the variations of some few words and sentences just suffice to indicate the somewhat different objects of the two writers, and the very different time when our compiler was having recourse to the common authority. The "good" purpose which was in David's heart is, like many other good purposes, obstructed by the will and providence of God himself. It is not one of that other kind of "good intentions," with which the way to hell is so often paved, when the man who forms the resolution and entertains the intention is he who of his own choice, or fickleness, or indifference, breaks it. It is acknowledged, therefore, and meets in fact with a large and gracious reward, in being made the occasion of the distinct revelation to David of a lasting house and perpetuated

kingdom in his line. The interest of this chapter is heightened, as will be seen, by the aspects of royal "home" life and peace which it presents.

Ver. 1.—We may easily imagine how the excitement, though not the deeper interest, attending the removal of the ark and the festival on occasion of its safe establishment on Zion had now subsided. David's thoughts respecting the honour due to God and to the ark of the covenant had time to grow into convictions, and they were greatly and rightly stimulated by reflection on his own surroundings of comfort, of safety, of stability and splendour. He revolved the possible methods and the right methods of showing that honour due. The completion of his own house, one presumably fit for the permanent abode of the King of Israel (ch. xiv. 1), is the clear demonstration to him that the ark should not dwell in a mere tent. It is a true touch of life, when it is written that as David sat in his house these thoughts possessed him, and so strongly. The exact time, however, here designed, and the exact occasion of his revealing the thoughts that burned within him, to Nathan, do not

appear either here or in the parallel place. In the opinion of some, an indication of some interval having elapsed is found in the words (2 Sam. vii. 1), "The Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies;" while others consider those words to refer to the victories gained over the Philistines, as recorded in ch. xiv. Nathan the prophet. This name suddenly breaks upon us, without any introduction, here for the first time. Nathan is emphatically entitled "the prophet," but perhaps merely to distinguish him from Nathan, David's eighth son. Amid many other important references to Nathan, and which speak for themselves, must be specially noted ch. xxix. 29; 2 Chron. ix. 29. And it will be noticed from the former of these references, in particular how Nathan is the prophet (**נָתָן**); not (like Samuel and Gad) seer (**נָבָן** or **נָבָר**). Possibly he is intended in 1 Kings iv. 5. An house of cedars. The cedar here spoken of does, of course, not answer to our red, odorous cedar. The word employed is **תֶּלֶת**, in the plural number. The first Biblical use of this word is found in Lev. xiv. 4, 6, 49—52. It is derived by Gesenius from an obsolete word **תָּלַת**, from the grip and the firmness of its roots. It is probably the *derived* signification, therefore, that should be adhered to (as in the Authorized Version), and not the original, where in Ezek. xxvii. 24, the plural of the passive part cipial is found, "made of cedar," not with A. Schultens, "*made fast*." The cedar genus belonging to the order Coniferae, is odoriferous, very lasting, and without knots. The numerous good qualities which it possesses are spoken to in the variety of uses, and good kind of uses, to which it was put—these all crowned by the almost solitary spiritualized appropriation of the tree, found in Ps. xcii. 12. From a comparison of 1 Kings v. 6, 8 (in the Hebrew, 20, 22) with 2 Chron. ii. 3, 8, and some other passages, we may be led to believe that the *cedar* as the name of timber was used occasionally very generically. Nevertheless, the very passages in question instance by name the other specific kinds of wood. Two of the chief kinds of cedar were the Lebanon and the Deodara, which is said not to have grown in Syria, but abounds in the Himalayas. And as the use of the Lebanon cedar for some purposes (e.g. for the masts of ships) is almost out of the question, it is exceedingly probable that this *Deodara* and some other varieties of pines are comprehended under the *eh-rez*. Dean Stanley points out what may be described as very interesting moral *landmark* uses of the celebrated cedars of Lebanon, in those passages which speak of Solomon's sweep of knowledge, commencing in the descending direction from them (1 Kings iv. 33), of the devouring fire that should begin

with the bramble and reach high up to those cedars (in Jotham's parable, Judg. ix. 15), and (in the parable of Joash, King of Israel, to Amaziah, King of Judah, 2 Chron. xxv. 18) of the contempt with which the family of the cedars of Lebanon is supposed to hear of the matrimonial overtures of the family of the thistles of Lebanon. Stanley's pages ('Sinai and Palestine,' edit. 1866, pp. 414—414d) are full of interest on the subject of the cedars of Lebanon (see also full article in Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. 285, 286; and Dr. Thomson's 'Land and the Book,' pp. 197—200). Cedar was the choice wood for pillars and beams, boarding and ceiling of the finest houses; and alike the first and second temples (Ezra iii. 7) depended upon the supply of it. Under curtains. Here rightly in the plural, though our parallel (2 Sam. vii. 2) shows the singular (Exod. xxvi. 1—13; xxxvi. 8—19).

Ver. 2.—This verse gives Nathan's response on the spur of the moment. And that it was not radically wrong from a prophet may be inferred from the stress afterwards laid upon the acceptableness to God of what had been in the heart of David to do. Even with God, silence would sometimes be understood by a prophet to be equivalent to assent.

Ver. 3.—The express word of God came, however, that same night. It proved to be an overruling word. But it brought with it the point of a fresh and most welcome new departure for David. We might glean here by the way a suggestion of the benevolent operation of express revelation, superseding the thought, the method, the reason of man.

Ver. 4—15.—These verses are the unfolding to David of the magnificent and far-stretching purposes of God's grace towards him in his son Solomon and his descendants for ever. The revelation is made by the mouth of Nathan.

Ver. 4.—Thou shalt not build. The Hebrew marks the personal pronoun here as emphatic, "Not thou shalt build," i.e. but some one else. In the parallel this prohibition is conveyed by that interrogative particle which expects the answer *No*, and may be thus translated: "Is it thou shalt build for me," etc.?

Ver. 5.—This verse contains the three terms—house, tent, tabernacle (see notes on ch. xvi. 1). Gesenius observes that when the Hebrew of the last two words is used distinctively, the *tent* describes the outer coverings of the twelve curtains; and the *tabernacle*, the ten inner curtains and framework as well, in other words, the whole equipment of the well-known tabernacle. As compared with the version we have here, the parallel place speaks an almost pathetic condescension, "I was a shifting traveller in tent and tabernacle." God meant to remind

David how surely and faithfully he had shared the pilgrim lot and unsettledness of his people. What most holy the tabernacle contained was herein a type of the bodily tabernacle of Jesus Christ in later times.

Ver. 6.—The judges of Israel. The substitution of the Hebrew character *beth* for *pe*, in the word “judges,” would make it “tribes,” and bring it into harmony with the parallel place. But the succeeding clause, Whom I commanded to feed my people, would rather suggest that the parallel place, which adds the same clause, should be brought into harmony with this (see again ver. 10 of this chapter). The general meaning and the gracious spirit underlying it is evident enough. God had never made a suggestion to tribe, or leader of tribe, nor to judge, who had been temporarily raised up to lead, and so to feed, all his people Israel, to build him an house. He had shared their lot, and had shared it unmurmuringly. He also “had not opened his mouth” (1 Kings viii. 12—16; ch. xxviii. 3, 4; Ps. lxxviii. 67—71). Note also the expression, “I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel” (1 Kings viii. 16). It is to be remarked that we learn from ch. xxii. 8 and xxviii. 3 the fuller causes why David was not to be permitted to be the builder of the house. It is not apparent why those causes are not recited here. The same remark applies to the parallel place.

Ver. 7.—I took thee. (So 1 Sam. xvi. 11, 12; 2 Sam. vii. 8; Ps. lxxviii. 80.) The sheepcote. The Hebrew *mām* strictly signifies a resting or place of resting. Hence the habitation of men or of animals, and in particular the pasture in which flocks lie down and rest (Ps. xxiii. 2, plural construction; Job v. 24; Hosea ix. 13; Jer. xxiii. 3; xl ix. 20). The sheepcote was sometimes a tower, with roughly built high wall, exposed to the sky at the top, used for protection from wild beasts at night; sometimes the sheepfold was a larger low building of different shape, to which a fenced courtyard was adjacent, where the peril of cold or of wild beast was less imminent. The word of our present passage, however, cannot be compared with these places; comp. rather Exod. xv. 13; 2 Sam. xv. 25; Isa. xxxiii. 20; lv. 10; Hosea ix. 13, as above.

Ver. 8.—And have made thee. This may be rendered *and will make thee*; in which case the promise to David commences with this rather than the following clause.

Ver. 9.—All the verbs of this verse are in the same tense as those of the foregoing verse, which are correctly translated. For an expression similar to the last clause of the verse, Neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, may be found in Ps. lxxxix. 22.

Ver. 10.—This verse should read on continuously with the preceding, as far as to the word “enemies.” The time here denoted will stretch from the people’s occupation of the land to the death of Saul, as the expression, “at the beginning,” in ver. 9, will point to the experience of Egyptian oppression. Will build thee an house; i.e. will guarantee thee an unfailing line of descendants.

Ver. 11.—The promise is now, not to “David and his seed,” but to David personally. The verse contains, no doubt, the original of the Apostle Peter’s quotation (Acts ii. 29, 30; see also Acts xiii. 34; Luke i. 32, 33). The last clause of this verse has Solomon, for the object of its pronoun “his.”

Vers. 12—14.—The reference of these promises was also to Solomon, and to him they were faithfully fulfilled. They were early perceived to be prophecies also, and of the highest significance and application (Ps. lxxxix. 26—37; Isa. ix. 7; lv. 3, 4; Jer. xxiii. 5, 6; xxxiii. 17—21; Zech. vi. 12, 13; Heb. i. 5; iii. 6). The alternative of the “son who commits iniquity” (2 Sam. vii. 14) is omitted from the middle of our thirteenth verse. The latter half of ver. 13 manifestly purports to say, “I will not take my mercy away from Solomon, as I did take it away from Saul.” The close of our fourteenth verse is in the parallel place (2 Sam. vii. 16) distinctly referred to David, with the use of the second person possessive pronoun.

Vers. 16—27.—These verses contain David’s response to the gracious communication which had been made to him, and thanksgivings for the promise made to him as regards his seed. His appreciation of the contents of that promise is expressed in a manner which would seem to indicate that he was not altogether untaught, even then, by the Spirit of some of the deeper significance of the far-reaching promise.

Ver. 16.—Sat before the Lord; i.e. before the ark. It has surprised many that it should be said that David *sat* before the Lord, in the act of prayer or devotion. But this was not altogether unusual (1 Kings xix. 4) in the first place; and then, secondly, it is not quite clear that this is said. Possibly he sat awaiting first some such token as he might know how to construe into the presence of Jehovah, and into his gracious vouchsafing to give him audience, and thereupon he may have altered his attitude. Confessedly, however, the other is the more natural reading.

Ver. 17.—David here makes a clear and very just difference between all that had been done for him, and the very great prospect now in addition put before him. Thou

... hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree; i.e. thou hast treated me, or dealt with me, in this promise as though I had been of high rank indeed. The parallel reading is very concise (2 Sam. vii. 19), and perhaps somewhat obscure, "And is this the manner [or, 'law'] of man?" or, "And this is to be a law of man," i.e. this continuity of a great while to come. Elliptical as this reading may seem, there is no real difficulty in feeling its essential harmony with the passage before us. David's unfeigned surprise and joy in the "great while to come" nature of the promises made to him and his house overpower all else in his estimation. It is, indeed, a most opportune emphasis that he lays upon this element of the full promise, and accords exceptionally well with our later knowledge and brighter light. Our Authorized Version rendering throws out sufficiently this surprise, and gives not inadequately the drift of the passage. The continuity and exaltedness of the promise, which was only fully realized in the greater Son of David, the Christ, might well astonish David.

Ver. 18.—*Thy servant.* The Septuagint Version has not got these words on their first occurrence. They may have found their way in wrongfully out of the next clause. They are not found in the parallel place. If they remain, they can mean nothing else than "How can David further acknowledge the honour conferred on thy servant"—a sense by no means far-fetched.

Ver. 19.—*For thy servant's sake.* The parallel place reads, "For thy word's sake." This reading is superior, and well suits the connection, suggesting also whether the

first occurrence of the word "servant" in the previous verse might not be similarly explained. The similarity of the characters of the words in the Hebrew would render easy the exchange of the one word for the other.

Ver. 21.—In the parallel verse (2 Sam. vii. 23), our Authorized Version, following the Hebrew text (כִּי), reads, "To do for you great things and terrible." The transition is awkward, no way in harmony with the other short clauses of the passage, and it would be inexplicable except for the alternative open to us, of regarding it as a quotation from Deut. iv. 34, brought in regardless of the context into which it was introduced. The difficulty does not meet us in our present passage, being obviated by the other sentences of our compiler. Both places, however, manifestly quote from the Book of Deuteronomy, with the grand passages and grand verbiage of which we may well imagine David familiar. A similar familiarity is also betokened in the following verses, as regard other Pentateuchal passages.

Ver. 22.—*Didst thou make.* This appears in Samuel, "Thou didst confirm."

Ver. 24.—The Hebrew text reads here naturally enough, *And let be established and magnified for ever thy Name.* The "established" in the last clause of the verse is not the same word with that used here.

Ver. 27.—The marginal, *It hath pleased thee,* is the corrector rendering of the Hebrew here, though the parallel place exhibits the imperative mood. That it may be before thee for ever. The fulfilment of these words can be found in the Messiah alone (comp. Ps. ii. 6—12).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—27.—*The purport and the service of one individual life unfolded authoritatively.* The contents of this chapter afford general aspects of great interest and of great importance. It is not often that we can do more than surmise the real use and intent of the life of a fellow-creature, or indeed even of one's self. Certain it is that from the beginning none can see to the end, and the lip that presumes to prophesy of the child or of the young man, prophesies at least as often vainly as correctly. Nor in the midst of life, its heyday of joy and vigour, or its day of enforced reflection and calmer retrospect, is the power very materially added to that would enable to gauge the life at all adequately, its genius, its measure of usefulness or success, or the place it should be justly counted to win in the universal race. While, lastly, the biographer's verdict—whatever the increased and enlarged opportunity of his horoscope—is among those things that are notorious for the suspicion they arouse. But here we have very much of a Divine pronouncement on the work of a life. And that this should occur in the case of David, harmonizes well with what Paul remarked (Acts xiii. 36) respecting him: "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid to his fathers, and saw corruption." His life is not yet closed, his work not yet finished; but on a remarkable occasion a voice from heaven speaks of it, at the same time that it also speaks to it. David is taught his place; it is his own fault if he is

not greatly assisted to learn his own character, and to see, plain as a sunbeam, his life's duty, or what remains of it. The chapter exhibits a parable true in large part of it of many a life, yet in a very great proportion of those lives true still only like a parable, unknown, unacknowledged, while life's best part is being lived. It shows—

I. **A LIFE LONG SPENT IN SOME OBEDIENCE TO DIVINE MONITIONS AND PRINCIPLE SUDDENLY SEEMING TO LIFT ITSELF UP FOR ITS HIGHEST EFFORTS GOD-WARD.** It cannot be said nor thought that the life of David, when a boy, had been an irreligious life—a life thoughtless of God, his ways and works, or defiant towards him. All the indications are to the contrary. From very earliest manhood, we know as fact that David's life had been remarkably answerable to Divine interposition, reverently received, gratefully and modestly acknowledged. Further, through the best and proudest of life's days that life had been so balked, so endangered, so keenly exercised, that it were not too much to say that even nature would have taught it some religion, and that it was glad to keep near to the mighty Friend. Yet had it known many a lapse, many a weariness, many an hour of faint faith, many an impure or very mixed motive. There can be no doubt, however, that hitherto the victory had always been of the good. Its greatest temptations were now upon it, when ease, peace, grandeur, luxury, were its lot. It bears the strain, and at the very time seems gathering together its strength for its supreme religious effort. Heart and conscience approve. Nay, a nation's heart and conscience join to approve. Conscious human purpose and love offer themselves volunteers for Divine work. Can there be a doubt of their acceptableness? At all events there proves to be a refusal of some sort to their acceptance.

II. **A LIFE LONG AND BRAVELY SPENT IN THE EXERCISE OF ALL ITS OWN ACTIVE ENERGIES SUDDENLY DISCOVERED STRICTLY BOUND BY DIVINE CONTROL.** David had been no passive recipient of Divine favour and protection. He had been constrained to employ all his own best judgment, talents, effort, and to add thereto many a loud and hearty and impassioned prayer for help, mercy, deliverance. Judging from what we know of human nature, of our own nature, we should not have wondered if the latter exercises of the soul had often seemed lost in comparison of the former energies of the mind and body. But again it turns out that it was not really so. In this character we do not have to do with the restless, brooding, defiant soul, of one who feels so pressed by circumstance that he cannot wait for priest, or prophet, or his God, but must act for himself and by himself. No; a blank refusal evokes from David the testimony that he holds himself practically and intelligently to the distinct order of a master. He knows control, submits to control, promptly and gracefully answers to it.

III. **A LIFE THAT THROUGH A LONG TIME HAD BEEN UNABLE TO SEE THE REASON OF ITSELF, AND TO WHAT IT WAS TO LEAD, AND WHERE THE STRANGE VICISSITUDE SHOULD END, SUDDENLY AUTHORITATIVELY INFORMED THAT IT WAS AND ALL THE WHILE HAD BEEN TRIBUTARY TO HIGHEST ENDS.** God tells David that from "the sheepcote" to his present "house of cedars" he had been with him, he had been training him, he had been evoking good out of all evil, for him personally and for all his people Israel. He had not been living, working, suffering, rejoicing, anguished with fear and cruelty, buoyant with hope and victory, for nothing, nor for a spasmodic, theatric, sensational display, nor for a mockery of collapse at last. No; it was to make him a name, and a great name, and a name divinely and historically through all time worth having—a model ruler, a model king, and a blessing to his people Israel. All the while, from the first breathing of David's name to this present, David had been drawn through a career which, all appearances notwithstanding, had been tributary to Divine results. What firmness, what confidence, what glory, is it to any life that can embrace this creed, and that believes it with the heart!

IV. **A LIFE THAT HAD BEEN CONDUCTED THROUGH EXTREMES OF EXPERIENCE, AND MANY AN HUMILIATING VARIETY AMONG THEM, IS NOW APPRISED THAT IT IS ADMITTED TO PARTICIPATION IN FULFILLING THE VERY HIGHEST OF DIVINE COUNSEL.** It is what astounds David beyond all else. It is what rejoices him above all else. It is what more than compensates for all the past. It pours streams of enraptured joy and corresponding vigour through all his nature. What thanks come from his lip! What adoring praise wells up from his heart! What prayer—a veritable "making request with joy"—he has strength and confidence to pour forth! His gladness for himself (whose purpose was just denied) and for his people is indistinguishably mingled—one

with his gladness in his God, the incomparable God of Israel, Lord of hosts, to whom there is none like for "greatness," for "terribleness," for "goodness," and for the "eternal blessedness" of his "blessing." Such was the course, such the fulfilment, such the final "manifestation," in that early "day of revelation," of one human life under heavenly guidance and Divine benediction. And it utters forth a parable for every true servant of God which little needs an interpretation.

Ver. 1.—*A just consideration of one's own position in life an incentive to works of practical piety.* Up to this point the life of David had been, to a remarkable degree, one of action. From childhood upward it is likely that he had passed little enough time which could be called idle time. The first employment, however, in which he had been engaged, that of the shepherd, may be safely presumed to have fostered the power of contemplation as well as of action, and to have been distinctly favourable to meditation. There can be little doubt that the very germs of the moral reflection which the psalms of later life manifest in such rich abundance took their origin thence. The grandeur of the aspects of external nature were thence suggested to him many a time, in strange contrast to many of the aspects of human life and the individual character. And again, from the same source of personal knowledge, at a glance, and quick as the twinkling of an eye, he saw the analogy that obtained between the works of nature and those of providence. Most noticeable, likewise, is it, that David rarely enough speaks in the slightest approach to the temper of the censorious critic of others, or of men in general. When his meditation is most comprehensive, and his deliverance universal in its application, it is perhaps even too plain, rather than not plain enough, that they come forth strongly marked with the impress of personal conviction, personal struggle of thought, personal experience. Nor is it likely that the months and years of his tearing and persecuted life had passed without much and deep thought. These are the realities of life that *make* to think those who have a mind to think. Amazed, pathetic, melancholy, and anon all strong in faith and buoyant with confidence, were the thoughts that paced what none would deny, were the ample spaces of the large mind of David. Yet perhaps, what with personal fear and danger, wars and rumours of wars, and an ever-increasing load of responsibility, succeeded now, and somewhat suddenly, by greatness and prosperity, his care of late had been somewhat too self-regarding. He has made his position—at all events, his position is made. His home is no longer the den and cave of the earth; he has builded himself a mansion of mansions—at all events, such a mansion is builded for him. We wait with interest and anxiety to know how he will use these great gifts, with what sort of heart and hand he will address himself to them. We do not wait very long, nor to be disappointed in the event. David shows that he is moved by a right principle himself, and he exhibits that principle in a very simple manner, the convenient example for all others. Let us observe—

I. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE, THAT IN WHAT A MAN HAS, OR IN WHAT HE IS HIMSELF, HE FINDS THE SUGGESTION THAT BEARS UPON OTHERS. This principle is the prohibition of selfishness, absolute and pure. It is one of the most elementary, most radical, most significant of the distinctions of the nature of man, as containing a moral element, and the nature of the brute presumably devoid of any such element. Resident as it is almost within the sphere of the mere *mental* qualities of human nature, unless destroyed or impaired first by causes of a moral complexion, it is nature's own simplest assertion and easiest illustration of the outrage it must be on all creation's design in man, when any one "liveth to himself" to such a degree as to disown it practically. To exemplify this principle both consciously and unconsciously, alike instinctively and intelligently, is to remain one of the brotherhood of humanity; to disacknowledge it, or to fail in practice to acknowledge it, is to exclude one's self, an impoverished and miserable outcast, from the comity of the family as such.

II. THE PRINCIPLE THAT IN WHAT A MAN HAS HIMSELF OF GOOD, HE FINDS THE SUGGESTION WAKENED IN HIM TO SEEK THE ADVANTAGE OF OTHERS. There are not a few who, thinking they have nothing or little, will think of others quickly, but only to compare themselves disparagingly to God's providence with them. There are not a few who, knowing that they have much, will promptly think of others, but it is to feed the ill nature within them, on envy of those who have more than they. And there are those who, having all that heart could wish and hands can hold, think that it is all

absolutely so their own, that to think of others is only to think that they are without part or lot in the matter. They owe none of it to God's gift. They owe none of it to man's help. They have gained and they have risen, all thanks and all credit only to themselves. And all that they have and all that they are is to and for themselves. But there are in human nature different dictates from these. There are those who compare themselves with others, to wonder unfeignedly why God has made them to differ, and in deepest humility to acknowledge their indebtedness to him. There are those who from the heart believe that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and whose first dictate is to give of all which they gain. They know and heed well the word that reminded them once, "Freely ye have received, freely give," and they have found for themselves that there is no life they so really have as that they give. Alike those who long to have but think they have not, and those who beyond question have, and have much, need most to be reminded what things possession, and large possession, has proved its power to effect. It is very apt to kill sympathy, to chill charity, to ingrain selfishness, and to create the overweening and haughty temper. Happy indeed when the contrary holds good, and that which should be in the nature God once created, exists and is still manifest. This was the case now with David, in spite of the peril in which he was placed. He had already abundantly shown that in all his own good he wished others to take a share.

III. THE PRINCIPLE OF BEING STIMULATED BY THE EXPERIENCE AND ENJOYMENT OF ONE'S OWN GOOD TO SEEK THE GOOD OF OTHERS, PRESENTED NOW IN ONE OF THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE OF ITS APPLICATIONS. The visible object of David's loving and sympathetic anxiety is now no longer human; it is the ark of God. Everything helps favour and set forth happily the example here given to us. Though the words are so few, the description so brief, it is a very living impression which they combine to produce upon us. It is not so often that the imagery of the East, the life of three thousand years ago, and the very language of the Old Testament, so accord for a moment with our own modern habits and feeling. We are invited to see David at ease in his own new house. He sits in that house. A friend and sacred friend, a prophet, is with him. He has been thinking many a time of that which he now resolves to put upon his lip, and confide to his prophet-friend. He has a house now for the first time, it may be said, in all his life. It is his own, and in every way his own, built for him and built by him. He knows every piece of cedar in it, and every block of stone. This means comfort for a man who has had a very driven, anxious, wearying life. It means stability for a man who was ordered about at first, hunted about secondly, and more lately in his own responsibility has been compelled to strain every nerve to meet the urgencies of his position. It means also safety, for David is now undisputed and sole king of all the land. And it means splendour exceeding all that his nation had ever known, and all that surrounding nations had known. That grand new house, however, would never have been the joy and satisfaction it is but that other work of his hand had been blessed, and the ark is in Zion. Yes, but the ark is not housed so worthily as David is himself, whereas he feels justly that it should be entertained far more worthily. It appears that it is not *human* sympathy merely which warms the heart of David. The principle is great and sacred, but there is for all that something which is higher, more sacred still. David would do honour to the God of the ark in finding a worthy temple-canopy for the ark of God. He believes in the Church of the living God, and in the living God of the Church. The "invisible appears in sight;" his gaze, his thought, his heart, are all held by it. He would spend untold labour, lavish unmeasured wealth, summon the pick of all the earth's wisdom and art and skill, in the service of him, who nevertheless needs no richest gifts of man, because all the wealth of all the universe is his. And David's thought is acceptable, and his purpose is right. There is the unwonted nobility of a spiritual purview about it. The homage of the heart is indisputably there. Practical faith is there. The merit of a grand national, ay, and universal, example is there. Here is no covert showing of sympathy, and giving of gift, and rendering of honour due, with indirect calculations and sidelong glances of how much shall come back in kind from admiring and surrounding and obsequious courtiers and friends. No, the servant is in the presence of the Master. The subject before the King of kings. The creature before the great Creator. The blessed dependent before the sole Giver of all good. And this fills him with shame, with humility, with impassioned desire, and

the worship of practical piety. **I**, who have received all, and am but what God has given and God made me, dwell in a house of cedar, while the ark of his covenant remaineth under curtains!

LESSONS. 1. There is doubtless no position in human life but has sufficient cause of thankfulness to stir up men of grateful heart to the exercise of compassion toward their fellow-creatures, and to the service and devotion of God. 2. But there is a law going further. It should be observed that for all *increase* of worldly good, strength, comfort, wealth, splendour, more sympathy with others, more compassion and charity toward them, should be yielded by the heart, and likewise more service and devotedness to God. 3. The highest and the surest forms of sympathy are those that obtain between man, and the Invisible, Spiritual, Eternal.

Vers. 2—5.—God's obstructions of the good purposes of men, and the uses of such obstructions. The greatest trials of man's faith lie in the working of the sovereignty of God. Yet there is not an individual attribute of the Creator to be yielded to him more unreservedly than this same sovereignty, which may be said to include in it the rights of many an attribute. The Divine frustration of our purposes, disappointment of our hopes, and summary determination of many a life that we thought made for the highest service, often enough elude all the acumen of our reason, and bring to nought in one moment the pride of creature-wisdom. But so soon as ever we are recovered from the first severity of the blow and from the deep prostration which it has inferred, it is always left to us to search for, gather, and compare the relative uses that may attend eases of this description of suffering. We may vainly seek the reason, as vainly as try to search the immortal mind itself; but far from vainly shall we attempt to observe attendant uses and lessons. Human wisdom is, indeed, never in so fair a way for increase and improvement as when thus engaged. The present narrative contains little or nothing of difficulty, however, either in respect of finding the reasons of God's prohibition, in the instance before us, or in respect of gathering the lessons and uses suggested by that prohibition. Let us notice—

I. THE REASONS, SO FAR AS HERE GIVEN, OF GOD'S DENIAL OF DAVID IN THE GOOD PURPOSE OF HIS HEART. It is remarkable that neither this passage nor the parallel to it states the one of these reasons on which the real stress would have been supposed to fall. We will notice this, therefore, in its place (ch. xxii. 8), inasmuch as the silence about it here is entire. We must not pass unnoticed, however, one and perhaps the only sign of an explanation of this silence which we can find. In both this and the parallel place the *historian* speaks. In ch. xxii. 8, xxviii. 3, where all the facts are boldly stated, it is the noble-hearted David himself who speaks; and in 1 Kings v. 3, where we have what may be called an intermediate account as regards fulness, the son Solomon speaks. Equally honourable to the historian and to David himself are these circumstances, to whatever further use they lend themselves. And no distant analogies will the New Testament yield, as *e.g.* when it is not the Evangelist John who will record some shortcoming of Peter, where Peter himself would have made clean breast of it all, with noble spirit of confession and self-surrender (comp. John xiii. 36—38, with Mark xiv. 29—31). Confining ourselves, then, to the reasons recorded in our present passage, they must stand confessed as of the most condescending and touching description. We must notice, *first*, that the reasons assigned for the refusal of permission to David to build do not carry the slightest reflection on him or his character, or the character of his foregoing life—the matter is viewed now not from the "standpoint" of David at all, but, if that may be reverently said by human lip which is so graciously done by Divine act, from the "standpoint" of the Divine Personage himself; and *secondly*, that those reasons do not exclude from consideration the fulfilment of the purpose of David's heart, but only his own fulfilment of that purpose. "Praying breath," sings one, "is never spent in vain." And holy purpose and noble religious ambition are not born and nourished in vain. They often fulfil more purpose in the subject of them, than their realization by himself would fulfil for the object of them, or for others generally. Personal disappointment, times without number, shall signify personal improvement, and *not* signify any loss to the general community, nor to the course of the world. Those reasons are delicately put, but will have been fully appreciated by David; and they are full of tenderest suggestion. They are: 1. That the Divine Friend, Leader,

Captain, has for ages and generations shared the pilgrim lot of his people. If they have not had a fixed home, so has it been with him also. If they have travelled from place to place, so has he also. 2. That he has shared this pilgrim lot of the people without a murmur, without a reproach, a request, or even a suggestion addressed to them. How often had they murmured, but he never! How often had they done worse than murmur! They had rebelled against the Holy One of Israel; but he had forgiven their backslidings, had not forsaken them, and to the last ripe hour would carry on his own wise, consistent, gracious purpose. They for whose sake all the journey, all the discipline, all the teaching, all the promise were, had wearied, and been impatient; but he had borne all the sorrow, and stood the mark of all the ingratitude, and gives up no jot nor tittle of the good purpose of his great decrees. He suffers with them, for them; he bears and still forbears. 3. That he will not even now anticipate by an hour, as it were, the established peace, happiness, and home of his people. Not till they are where he designs to place them, and have all that he purposes to give them, will he permit his own house to be builded, his own throne to be set, or himself to "arise and enter into his rest." Great every way is the moral sublimity of this position, when brought into comparison with that so often assumed by men. Each thinks for himself, each snatches for himself, each hastens to make secure above all his own position first. And in the very instance before us, whether more or less rightly, David has built his own house first—has set the example, and established himself first, a representative of the people, and of how it should be with them also. But the Divine Leader and Lord of the people all, both nation and king, observes this different order. He fixes the time, the place, the peace and rest of all, before he will allow that the hour has come for himself. It is a little type and a suggestive analogy of what is ever going on throughout nature and the entire world. All the forces of these are at work, and intensely active; their push and strife and tumult are wonderful. They are beneath all appearances finding their own place and fulfilling their legitimate mission, till when they all are satisfied, the Lord shall enter in an emphatic sense his holy temple. A moment all the earth shall keep silence before him, but the next moment the vast theatre shall resound again with his praise. Whatever fitness of time there may have seemed to David to be present now, we may understand God to say that he knows all that shall be yet, and is biding the moment of supreme occasion. Nor is there a lesson that more needs, in all our impatience and short-sighted eagerness, to be made familiar with us, and to be accepted with the sacredness of a principle.

II. THE USES OF GOD'S DENIAL OF HUMAN PURPOSES, EVEN WHEN AS WELL MEANT AS THAT OF DAVID. Such uses may have been very many, and a large proportion of them very indirect, in the present instance. But if not so in any one particular case—if, on the contrary, very few and definite in their character—the other alternative will prove the rule. The apparent slight which God puts on our purposes and our higher aspirations, we may rest assured, is *but* an apparent slight. It is not real, and is compensated for by what vastly outweighs the pain and disappointment and sorrow of it. Those Divine contradictions: 1. Save us from self-dependence and spiritual pride. These are two of the most noxious weeds, and most baneful their shade, which grow in a nature spiritually inclined. 2. They exert a direct tendency to increase the wisdom and circumspection and adaptedness of our human purposes. If our aspirations are not still continued, they were not deep, and are not entitled to any sympathy if blown away like chaff by the wind. But if they were deep and genuine, then we take them back again, nurse them in our hearts, and even improve upon them. The poor thing called our *wisdom* then grows—perhaps only then. 3. They increase the deep, calm purity of our heart's purpose. Amazing is the proportion of ecclesiastical zeal, priestly zeal, zeal to have dominion over other men's souls, and to usurp domination over their whole life thereby, compared with the zeal for God's glory, simple and pure, and man's soul in its infinite value, infinite danger. If any spiritual purpose were fed by the inflammable fuel of success, a fire would be lighted which would know no suppression, but which would inevitably, in a vast majority of cases, fatally envelop first of all them that lit it. 4. They will increase the reverence and deep religious fear of our noblest human purposes. Easy usefulness, uniform success, rapidly engenders perfunctory service, and perfunctory service bespeaks prompt disaster, wherever it touches the temple, the Church, the altar. 5. They will, in fact, *increase force*. No loss will in the event be

sustained. That which can best be spared will have disappeared. The good will be left. And though that good may not show the same *bulk*, nor utter the larger volume of sound, it will be irresistible. It will work its way, steal its way, penetrate its way; it will thaw the ice, break the stone, melt the iron of human hearts; it will be mighty with the breath of God's own spirit. When, therefore, God holds back awhile our good purpose, it is to make good better. And the better good will always make in the long run the mightier good.

Ver. 17.—*The last glory of God's goodness to his servants found in the distant horizon he offers to their vision.* This verse contains a part of David's response to the communication which had been made to him. That communication had contained a refusal, and one which under most circumstances would have been felt to be charged with a disappointment sufficient to overspread all the scene with gloom, and to require some little time to recover from. But there was much in the communication to heal at once that disappointment, and to prevent the rankling of offended feeling and affection. It was all couched in gracious language, spoken in a gentle tone though firm, accompanied with reasoning and some individual reasons, softened by tender memories, and memories very suggestive and instructive; and above all, if it wanted in the present, the present want was abundantly compensated for by a sure promise of the future; if it lacked anything directly to himself, it were easy to bear it, when that lack was to be turned into glorious abundance in the person of his own best-loved Son. Accordingly, this response of David is found to be one of very prompt, very dutiful submission. David bows to the Divine fiat and kisses the rod which smites. The response goes beyond meek surrender and unhesitating acquiescence. David cordially accepts the representations made, and every turn and illustration and enforcement of them drawn from his own fast life. He knows every word to be true. He knows what he owes to special favour, special promotion, special deliverance, and continued faithful protection. The "sheep-cotes" of old, and his "palace of cedars" of to-day, proclaim facts and tell a tale that melt his heart not to submission only, but to grateful love. And his response is filled with grateful thanksgiving, trustful prayer, adoring praise. In all this response of David, nothing, perhaps, is more effective, nothing meant more than the touch contained in this verse, "Thou hast spoken of thy servant's house for a *great while to come.*" Let us notice here—

I. THE FIRST FORM OF A VERY GREAT PRINCIPLE, AS IT PRESENTED ITSELF TO THE VIEW OF DAVID. Something, it is abundantly evident, took very firm hold of David's fancy in the continuity of the promise made to him, in his son Solomon and the line of his succession. But it is a little thing to say it took hold of his fancy. It took hold of much that was deepest in him—far deeper than fancy is generally held to go. The light of David, we often say, and probably not incorrectly, was dim. But something else was not very dim, it would appear. Nature and instinct, feeling and affection, aspiration and its silent pertinacious testimony, looking ever to the upward and the onward,—these were not so very dim. All, however, that appears on the surface now was this. David has been reminded, in language very plain, of the rock whence he was hewn, and the pit whence he was digged; of the low estate of his onetime life, and of how he owes an unwonted much to the goodness, unmerited, sovereign, of his almighty Patron and Defender. His early life is summarized. All his past life to this throbbing hour is exhibited, brought well into the foreground. Not a feature of it does David dispute. No wound vanity, nor vanity unwounded, strives to draw a veil on his humble origin. To the full he accepts and proceeds upon the description given him of himself, and acknowledges, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And yet" (one might have thought David knew the modern adage, though reverently, "Gratitude a lively sense of favours to come") "this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God" (it evidently was now, comparatively speaking, a small thing in his own eyes); "for thou hast also spoken of thy servant's house for a *great while to come.*" The continuity of the goodness and favour of God, and the continuity of them to a future a great distance off, evidently riveted and fascinated the thought of David. And was there not something great, something good, something of a high type in this? Let us track—

II. THE ESSENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE, THE RADICAL ELEMENTS PRESENT IN THE PRINCIPLE

WHICH APPEARS TO TAKE NOW SUCH A HOLD ON DAVID. Very true it is that the indications are many, and scarcelymistakable, of sense pressing heavy on patriarch and priest, king and prophet, of Old Testament history. Some striking exceptions, however, there are to the contrary. And perhaps, in almost all cases, there are to be found traces of exception in a direction least to have been reckoned upon *a priori*, viz. in the matter of the admirable distribution of attention and love, which marked their regard for both body and soul after death. For the pious Israelite great was the fascination of the future—that future that began where sense ended. His reverent provision for the body then meant something altogether different from the ostentation of funeral obsequies. It was thought and imaginings upborne on strong pinions of faith, and impelled by the temperate and obedient force of a far-enduring patience. Pride of pedigree and of the traceable genealogies of a dozen centuries forepast, how this dwarfs before the excursions of a taught faith, a trained imagination, an inspired hope, that peer into that “great while to come” called the eternal future! It is evident that this lies at the root of David’s deep satisfaction and adoring gratitude now. He had been reared of nothing, and was but of yesterday, but the revealed word that is spoken to him gives him to ‘scry a far future. And for him to feel joy in this, two elements must have been present. 1. A very vital faith took hold of the idea that was contained in assurance and promise for his son and his people. 2. And the idea becomes at once welcome fact; the earnest is possession. His heart transports him into the future, and converts that future into so much good *bonâ fide* present. These are among the greatest triumphs of a taught, a receptive, a willing spiritual nature. It is the diametrical opposite of the disposition of those who must have all now, and to whom the future is less than shadow, nothing more than utter fiction. There are not a few who *want* to have things irreconcilable. They want to have the pleasures of sin, which are essentially “for a season,” and not forfeit those advantages which as essentially come of present abstinence and a patient waiting. The faith that really apprehends the unseen, the patient waiting that willingly *defers* fruition, are the two guarantees, so far as human quality and human conditions are involved, that qualify the human to transmute itself into the Divine, and the mortal to merge into immortality. And David testifies to these imperial possessions now. He acquiesces in one moment in everything that is evidenced derogatory to claim, merit, dignity, in his own past, in order to seize with passionate eagerness, with grateful acknowledgment, on that which is spoken concerning him and his, for the “great while to come.” In these essential facts, then, David is a religious model for even Christian times, for all times. To be able to lose sight in favour of gaining faith, to part with sense to apprehend spirit, to quit the present in order to dwell in the future and occupy it with the objects of affection beforehand,—these are the distinguishing characteristics of the spiritual and the newborn. And the best part of these David had, when he pleaded guilty to any and all disparagement of the past; didn’t stop to look a second time at the personal disappointment of the present, but did “embrace” eagerly and with all his heart the proffered possession of the “great while to come.”

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vera. 1, 2.—*Generous purposes.* Some time had elapsed since David had brought up the ark from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem. Although the king had lodged the sacred chest in a handsome tabernacle, he was not satisfied; for he did not consider that he had rendered to the symbol of the Divine presence and authority the honour that was due. Himself dwelling in a palace of cedar-wood, he desired to see a house of stately magnificence built for the service of his God.

I. A KING’S PROPOSAL. It was in David’s heart to adorn and sanctify his metropolis by a temple which should serve as the emblem of the nation’s consecration to Jehovah. 1. We observe in this desire of the king how respect for God and the ordinances of his worship may lead to purposes of labour and self-sacrifice. It is possible that vanity and ostentation may lead to some enterprises of magnitude which may pass for evidences of religious fervour. Yet oftentimes an affectionate and grateful heart has found expression in costly and at the same time useful undertakings. 2. We observe also that generosity

is never better employed than in advancing the glory of God. This may be done not merely by what are distinctively termed religious acts, but by deeds of benevolence and philanthropy, animated by the love of Christ.

II. A PROPHET'S ENCOURAGEMENT. David unfolded to his counsellor, Nathan the prophet, the generous intention of his heart. Sometimes those who in such circumstances are taken into confidence and counsel repress the liberal designs unfolded to them. But Nathan took another course. What wisdom and right feeling are apparent in the counsel, "Do all that is thine heart"! And it should be remarked that Nathan brought the truths and promises of religion to bear upon the royal heart. "God is with thee." That was as much as to say—God has put the desire in thy heart; God will assist thee in carrying out thy project; and God will accept what it is thy purpose to offer him.—T.

Vers. 7—11.—*Assurance of favour.* The Lord acknowledged the goodness of David's wish to build him a house, even when refusing permission for that wish to be gratified. And the Lord made this occurrence an opportunity for expressing his regard for his servant. Reminding David of his past faithfulness, he assured him of continued favour. He who had been so distinguished by marks of Divine interest and approval in the past, could not fail to place confidence in the expression of an unchanging kindness. This passage is remarkable as representing the favour of God revealed in especial fulness and richness.

I. DAVID WAS ASSURED OF GOD'S FAVOUR, TO HIMSELF PERSONALLY. We are told that the poet-king was "a man after God's heart." Certainly, all his life through he was the object of singular kindness and forbearance. Elevation from a lowly to the loftiest station, assistance against all his enemies, an honourable reputation, an established throne,—such were the instances of Divine favour which David received at the Lord's hands. Prosperity and power, wealth and fame, followed a youth of romantic adventure and hardships and vicissitudes. That outward prosperity shall attend every one of the Lord's people is what no intelligent person can expect; but every true Christian may rejoice in the assurance of that loving-kindness which is "better than life," of that faithfulness which never leaves, never forsakes, those who confide in it.

II. FAVOUR WAS PROMISED TO DAVID'S POSTERITY. All men, and especially nobles and kings, count the prosperity and advancement of their children as part of their own well-being. The reader of Aristotle's 'Ethics' is aware that the ancient Athenians were wont to consider a man's happiness as bound up with the good fortune of his children. David had won a throne by his ability and valour; it was natural that he should desire to have a successor upon that throne who should maintain the renown and the power of the founder of the royal house. Hence the assurance, "The Lord will build thee an house," was one peculiarly welcome to the son of Jesse. No true Christian can be indifferent as to the welfare of his children. Nothing gives such a one greater joy than to see his sons and daughters walking in the truth. He sins if he sets his heart upon their temporal advancement and prosperity. But he is right in seeking and in praying for their salvation. When God's favour brings them to fellowship with Christ, it seems to him that his "cup runneth over."

III. FAVOUR WAS PROMISED TO DAVID'S PEOPLE. When the Lord sent to his servant a message of mercy and a promise of peace and blessing, he perfected the grace by a large and liberal declaration of his intentions of favour toward Israel. Monarch and subjects were to be alike blessed. Israel should be planted, should not be moved or wasted, and should be victorious over all enemies. When a nation is assured of Divine care and protection, "blessed is the people that is in such a case." For his is the blessing that maketh rich, and with it he addeth no sorrow. A true patriot will desire for his country, not only wealth and renown and power, but the righteousness which "exalteth a nation." Such prosperity as, in the ninth and eleventh verses, was promised to Israel, could not but be welcome. When we implore the Divine favour, let it not be for ourselves alone, but for "our kindred according to the flesh." The king, the statesman, the reformer, rejoices when his country's good is secured, when the smile of the Almighty rests upon the land "from the beginning unto the end of the year." The prayer of every true patriot should be, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us."—T.

Vers. 7, 8.—*God in individual history.* In what way the Lord communicated with Nathan we do not know; but the sacred history represents him as choosing the prophet as the means of making known to the king his holy will. On this occasion, Nathan was directed to preface his divinely given instructions by the remarkable declaration of the text; to remind David that God had been near him, had been with him, all his life through. General truths of the most vital interest are propounded in these simple words.

I. DIVINE PROVIDENCE HAS CARE OF EACH HUMAN LIFE. A very childish notion of providence is that God concerns himself with the affairs of nations and Churches, but cannot condescend to interest himself in individuals. This misconception arises from too mean a view of the omnipresent and omniscient Supreme. Well may we exclaim, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?”

II. DIVINE PROVIDENCE CAN SUMMON FROM THE LOWLIEST TO THE LOFTIEST STATION. David was raised from the sheepcote to the throne. And his is but one of many similar cases of marvellous exaltation. God’s election of his servants for work which he has for them to do calls for our amazed admiration; he finds and fashions instruments for every service. And Scripture is full of examples of the exercise of his sovereign prerogative. He exalts the lowly and abases the proud. He proves his royalty by choosing those whom men would have passed by, and the event ever honours and attests his wisdom.

III. DIVINE PROVIDENCE CAN ACCOMPLISH ITS PURPOSES NOTWITHSTANDING ALL OBSTACLES. The Lord reminded David of his presence, of his protecting and delivering care and mercy, of the prosperity which he had vouchsafed to his servant. When God takes a work in hand, he suffers nothing to thwart him. Obstacles disappear; opposition is disarmed; enemies are defeated. When God designates a man for a special service, he imparts all needful qualifications; he removes every hindrance to efficiency; he gets himself glory in the glory of his servant.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Be content with your lot; high or low, it is what an all-wise Father has appointed. 2. Be grateful for the past, remembering the way by which he has led you. 3. Be trustful for the future.

“Father, I know that all my life
Is portioned out for me,
And the changes that will surely come
I do not fear to see :
But I ask thee for a present mind,
Intent on pleasing thee.”

T.

Ver. 12.—*A mutual covenant.* This prophetic declaration must be read in the light of subsequent events; for it was fulfilled in the annals of Solomon’s peaceful and prosperous reign. The king *did* build God a house, a service and honour not permitted to his father. God *did* establish Solomon’s throne, giving him victory, peace, wealth, wisdom, and fame. The connection between the two parts of this verse is very instructive, exhibiting as it does the relation between God and his people. He, in mercy, condescends to accept their services, and at the same time confers upon them the tokens of his favour, blessing and prosperity.

I. WHAT WE MAY DO FOR GOD. In using such language, we must bear in mind our entire dependence. It is only by employing the powers our Creator has given, the opportunities he has afforded us, that we can be enabled to accomplish any work for his glory. He gives the motive to all service in the love of Christ, the power for all service in the grace of the Holy Spirit. Still, just as Solomon was permitted to build God a house, so every Christian has some edifice of holy, devoted, acceptable service to rear to his Saviour’s praise. It is matter for wondering gratitude that we, poor, ignorant, feeble, helpless creatures, should be allowed to do anything for the honour of the Most High God; that he should deign to accept anything at our unworthy hands. Yet we are not only at liberty, we are actually invited, first, to provide in our heart an habitation for the Eternal, and further to construct some building of fair deeds of holiness and benevolence which shall glorify his sacred name.

II. WHAT GOD WILL DO FOR US. Regarding Solomon, this was the Lord’s

promise: "I will establish his throne for ever." Our calling, our circumstances, differ from those of Israel's king. Yet there is a certain appropriateness in this language, as applied to all the people of God. The blessings of spiritual strength, stability, and peace, are assured by a gracious and covenant God to all his people. He is their "Sun and Shield." His compassion toward them shall not fail. They shall rejoice in his favour and his faithfulness. "They shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end."

CONCLUSION. 1. Let us diligently seek God's favour. It is in Christ that he has shown himself gracious. His favour is life, and it may be secured by every lowly, faithful applicant. 2. Let us show our sense of God's favour to us, by offering our devoted service to him. The wonder is even greater that God should suffer us to do aught for him, than that he should do so much for us. Let us respond to his summons, and "arise and build."—T.

Ver. 13.—*Father and son.* These words are by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was, in an especially and pre-eminent sense, the Son of God. Yet the context, and still more the parallel passage in the Second Book of Samuel, makes it evident that they were originally spoken with reference to Solomon. We are warranted, by the teaching of the New Testament, in applying them to all those who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, who have been adopted into the spiritual family, and made heirs of Divine promises. Of this glorious doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood, so clearly and powerfully revealed in the New Testament, there are intimations, such as the present, in various parts of the Old Testament Scriptures.

I. IN WHAT GOD'S FATHERHOOD CONSISTS. This is shown to some extent in the context, and in the narrative of Solomon's early life and reign. But generally speaking we may rejoice that the fatherhood of God is shown in: 1. *His providential care.* As a Father, our Creator supplies the wants, both temporal and spiritual, of his dependent family. 2. *His tender love.* There is more than goodness, more than bounty, in God's treatment of his children. They have a moral nature able to appreciate kindness, forbearance, sympathy, and love. And, in his treatment of them, he has adapted his communications and his conduct to their spiritual need. 3. *His wise discipline.* It is distinctive of a true father's sway, that it aims at the highest good of the children. God certainly appoints trials for his offspring, and he reveals to us the consolatory truth, "Whom he loveth he scourgeth, and chasteneth every child whom he receiveth." When we suffer he is not insensible. "Like as a father pitith his children, so the Lord pitith them that fear him." 4. *His purposes for his children's future.* As a father looks forward, and trains his son for the duties and responsibilities of after-life, so the great Father in heaven is maturing us for other scenes, higher employments, purer joys.

II. WHAT HUMAN SONSHIP INVOLVES. A true son is sensible of his father's watchful care, thoughtful kindness, tender affection. And he renders a filial return. In worship there is involved: 1. *Gratitude.* From God's spiritual family there goes up to heaven a daily song of thanksgiving and praise, for favour and forbearance never failing. 2. *Reverence and submission.* The awful superiority of God must impress every just mind. The prayer offered will begin with the ascription, "Hallowed be thy Name." 3. *Love.* For, though so high, God is yet a Father, and "we love him, because he first loved us." 4. *Obedience.* This is the true test of filial reverence and of filial affection. There is no unfailing proof of love's sincerity save this. 5. *Likeness.* For, born anew by God's Spirit, God's children are imitators of God, resembling him in the moral features of his holy and amiable character. Admire the glorious work of the Divine and gracious Spirit.—T.

Ver. 16.—*Humility.* This chapter is one of peculiar beauty, as exhibiting at once the gracious intentions of the Lord towards one of his servants, and the grateful response of that servant to the condescension and loving-kindness with which he was treated. The spirit of self-abnegation and humility breathing in the language of the text awakens our admiration, and calls for our imitation. We are reminded by these words of—

I. OUR UNWORTHINESS AND ILL DESERT. "Who am I . . . that thou hast brought me hitherto?" It is an unwonted attitude for many minds. Men are so prone to regard their own fancied excellences, that language of humiliation and contrition is often suspected of insincerity. Yet, in the presence of him who is at once the perfectly holy and the Searcher of hearts, what more appropriate than prostration of soul and acknowledgment of sin?

II. GOD'S GRACE AND KINDNESS TO THOSE WHO DEPEND UPON HIM. The Lord exalts the humble and meek. The king acknowledged not only his own utter unworthiness of the distinction accorded to him, but God's infinite mercy and goodness in his treatment of his servant. "According to thine own heart hast thou done all this greatness." There are in Scripture many beautiful examples of God's grace to the lowly in heart. Read the song of Hannah, and the *Magnificat* of Mary the mother of Jesus; and observe how the Lord is acknowledged as the great King who delights to have mercy upon the feeble who yet are faithful, and to put honour upon them, and reveal to them his love and mercy. In fact, revelation abounds with practical proofs of God's purpose ever to reject the proud, and to favour and exalt the meek, the lowly, and the contrite. It is upon those who sincerely ask, "Who am I?" that the Lord of glory delights to confer the tokens of his approval and favour.

III. THE SPECIAL FAVOUR SHOWN TO US BY GOD, WHO DEIGNS TO USE US IN HIS SERVICE AND KINGDOM. Evidently David felt that the highest honour was put upon him in being allowed to serve Jehovah—to be an instrument in his hands for the carrying out of Divine purposes. What dignity and happiness does it give to life, to know that we are commissioned and employed by the King of kings!

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. These considerations should enhance our conceptions of God's glory and grace. Let us recount his mercies, and acknowledge their Divine source. 2. They should induce us to consecrate afresh to Heaven the nature Heaven has created, and the powers Heaven has conferred.—T.

Vers. 20—22.—*God incomparable.* Surrounded as they were by idolatrous nations, it was natural that the Israelites should often draw comparisons between their own God, and the God of the whole earth, on the one hand, and the so-called gods of the heathen on the other. The most important contrast would be in character; for, whilst the idolatrous peoples worshipped gods who were the impersonation of cruelty, caprice, and lust, Jehovah was worshipped as a holy, a righteous, a merciful Lord and Ruler. Yet there was another contrast—that between the powerlessness of the idols of the nations, and the might and wisdom of the true and living God. In Ps. cxv. this contrast is wrought out with vigour and irony.

I. THERE IS NONE LIKE GOD IN HIS BEING. All creatures, as their name implies, are fashioned by a superior power, and upheld in life by him in whom they "live and move and have their being." The Lord is the self-existing Being, who is from eternity to eternity.

II. THERE IS NONE LIKE GOD IN HIS ATTRIBUTES. All our qualities of mind are derived from him, and, so far as they are excellent, they are gleams of his brightness. Human virtues are the growth of a Divine seed. But in Jehovah all perfections meet and harmonize.

III. THERE IS NONE LIKE GOD IN HIS PROVIDENCE. This seems especially to have impressed the mind of the king, when he poured forth his adoring thanksgiving before the Lord. The recollection of God's goodness and faithfulness, not only to himself and his household, but also to the nation of Israel, awakened his grateful and admiring praises. And we too have these reasons in abundance to prompt our thanksgivings and confidence.

II. THERE IS NONE LIKE GOD IN MERCY AND LOVING-KINDNESS. These are attributes of God; but they are attributes called into exercise by our state and position as sinners in the sight of the Searcher of hearts, the righteous Judge and King. In this passage David acknowledges that God redeemed his people Israel, made them his own, became their God. How gloriously are these expressions justified in the dispensation of the gospel, of God's infinite love towards our race in the gift and the effective mediation of his dear Son! Let these reflections (1) awaken our gratitude to him who has made himself known to us, and who, though incomparable and alone, deigns to communicate

in grace and compassion with us; and (2) prompt us to testify to his adorable excellence, and to summon our brethren, the children of men, to put their trust under the shadow of his wings.—T.

Ver. 27.—A father's prayer. This was a prayer founded upon a promise. God had declared his purposes towards the seed of his servant David, and David was honouring God's faithfulness, as well as expressing his own heart's desire, when he thus solemnly and confidently invoked the blessing of the Giver of all good upon his household and his posterity.

I. FAMILY FEELING IS DIVINELY ORDAINED. Nations of warriors have sometimes regarded and treated such feeling as weakness. On the contrary, it is implanted by the Creator; and God, the universal Father, cannot but be pleased with fatherly sentiment and fatherly care on the part of the heads of human households.

II. FAMILY FEELING IS HALLOWED BY RELIGION. Always a beautiful thing, a father's love becomes a holy thing when it is sanctified by a spiritual tone of mind and a spiritual habit of life.

III. FAMILY FEELING WILL PROMPT A FATHER'S PRAYERS. If it is natural to wish well to our children, it is religious to express those wishes before him who does so much to fulfil our best and purest desires. As it would be criminal in any parent to be careless as to his children's future, so it would be monstrous in a Christian parent to omit to commend his offspring to the care and guidance, love and sympathy, of our Father in heaven.

IV. FAMILY FEELING WILL LOOK FORWARD TO THE COMMON ENJOYMENT OF BLESSINGS DURING THE ENDLESS FUTURE. It is questionable whether the language of the text has any reference to the future state. In praying that his house might be "before the Lord for ever," and so "blessed for ever," David was probably contemplating the permanence of his throne and that of his descendants. His prayer has been answered in a manner deeper than he could have anticipated. But we are bound to seek for our posterity an immortal happiness, and to anticipate for our families reunion in the presence and in the service of the Eternal.—T.

Vers. 1-6.—Truths under the surface. A very pleasant picture is here presented to our imagination. We see the King of Israel sitting in his house, "the Lord having given him rest round about from all his enemies" (2 Sam. vii. 1), with a happy and grateful sense of prosperity and security, not wrapping himself in the dangerous robe of complacent self-congratulation, but rather clothed with humility and thankfulness. As he surveys the stateliness and elegance of his palace, he thinks of God's goodness to him in placing "his feet in a large room" (Ps. xxxi. 8), and his thought naturally passed to the place where the ark rested—the ark with which the presence of Jehovah was so closely connected (Exod. xxv. 22). We do not wonder at the thought which then occurred to him. We see in these verses those truths which are not upon the surface, but which we have no difficulty in recognizing beneath it.

I. THE SOUND SENTIMENT AT THE HEART OF DAVID'S DESIRE. David felt that there was an impropriety in himself dwelling "in an house of cedars" while "the ark of the covenant of the Lord remained under curtains" (ver. 1). Was it for him to be in better and more costly surroundings than was the manifested presence of God himself? Should he be more honoured in his dwelling-place than the ark of the covenant of the Lord? There is a sound sentiment here; one that was and is worthy not only of respect but cultivation. We are always to give God the very best we can offer him; the less costly we may expend on ourselves, the best we should reserve for him. We should be ashamed to lay out large sums of money on our own homes while the house of God needs renovation or repair; to expend a large proportion of our income on our own honour or gratification when the cause of Christ is languishing for want of funds, when the treasury of Christian benevolence is empty. Not most for ourselves with a very small fraction for God and his kingdom, but enough (or even more than enough) for ourselves and the most and best we can furnish for him and for his. That is the true thought of the reverent mind, Hebrew and Christian.

II. THE TRUE THOUGHT AT THE HEART OF NATHAN'S COUNSEL. "Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee." The prophet's encouragement of the king's desire

proved to be mistaken, but the thought at the heart of his words was true and sound. Nathan spoke as one who believed that the man with whom God dwelt was likely to come to right conclusions. So he was; and David was only wrong in wishing that he himself might be the instrument of carrying out a praiseworthy project. If God is with us as he was with David, it is most likely we shall be guided to right decisions. It is not the very learned, nor the very clever, nor the very "practical" man, but the very godly man, who is likely to have the true sentiment in his mind respecting the things of God. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," etc. (Ps. xxv. 14; see John vii. 17; xv. 15). The man who walks with God and with whom God dwells may fall, now and again, into a mistake, but he is not likely to be "greatly moved" from the path of wisdom. He is in the way of being led in the paths of wisdom, of being "guided into all truth."

III. THE VALUABLE TRUTH CONTAINED IN THE DIVINE DECLARATION. (Vers. 3-6.) God declared that he had never demanded of his people that they should make other provision than that of the simple tabernacle or tent. He had been pleased hitherto to manifest his presence in connection with this humble fabric. He would remind his servant David that as there could be no structure, however grand and stately, which the art of man could raise that would be a worthy home of him whom the heaven of heavens could not contain, so, on the other hand, there was no covering, however humble, within which he was not ready to abide if hearts were true and lives were holy. The precious and vital thought of the passage is that God does not require the elaborations of human art or the expenditure of human wealth to vouchsafe his presence and make known his power. Let there be (1) the contrite heart, (2) the childlike, believing spirit, (3) the obedience of the pure and loving life, and then God's abiding home will be found. Whom the costly cathedral will not hold, the cottage roof may shelter. He may desert the breast which is covered with the priestly garments to dwell in the heart of him who is "clothed in camel's hair."—C.

Vers. 7-15.—*Three spiritual necessities.* The message which Nathan was charged to deliver to David calls before us three necessities of our spiritual nature, which apply to all men everywhere, in every position, and in all ages. We have need of—

I. AN OPEN MIND TO RECEIVE GOD'S SPECIAL TEACHING. Nathan was familiar with the broad and general principles of religious truth. He was an enlightened servant of Jehovah—a prophet whose inspiration was from on high. But he needed a special vision (ver. 15) to see the truth which was to be declared on this occasion. Until he received that vision he was under the impression that David would do well to carry out his pious purpose (ver. 2), but from that time he discouraged and, indeed, arrested the intention of the king. If such a man as he, with whose spirit God was in close communion, needed to be instructed on particular occasions, how much more do we? Our general knowledge of Divine truth, even taken in connection with an abiding relation to the Spirit of God (1 Cor. vi. 19), does not ensure to us an understanding of special questions without special illumination from the Source of all wisdom. Again and again we need to have the quick eye to see the pointing of the Divine finger, the open ear to hear the Divine voice, the sensitive heart to respond to the Divine touch. This in respect to our temporal affairs, to the government of the home, to the ordering of the Church of Christ.

II. A READY REMEMBRANCE OF GOD'S PAST MERCIES. (Vers. 7, 8.) David was to be disappointed in being denied the gratification of this strong wish of his heart; but he was to remember what great things God had done for him, taking him from the sheepcote and placing him on the throne, attending his steps as Guardian and Guide, giving him the victory over his enemies, raising him to a position of eminence even among kings. It was a small thing to be denied this one desire. We should carry about us at all times such a sense of the great blessings God has given us—the endowments, the deliverances, the recoveries, the bestowments of our whole past course—that at any time this may weigh down and bury out of our sight any small disappointment which the Ruler of our lives may permit us to suffer. A strong and full sense of mercies in the past will silence the first sigh of discontentment, will turn it into a song of holy gratitude.

III. AN INTELLIGENT GRASP OF DIVINE PROMISES. It may be that we may need

more than a view of past mercies: we may require a prospect of good things to come. God graciously provided David with both. He intimated to him through Nathan that he was intending to do great things for him. He would (1) consolidate the kingdom of Israel so that it should become strong and safe (ver. 9); (2) multiply his victories over his enemies (ver. 10); (3) establish his dynasty (vers. 10, 14); (4) give his son the privilege which he was withholding from him (vers. 11, 12); (5) show to this son of his a fatherly patience (ver. 13). These were very great promises, amply sufficient to compensate for one disappointment. What large promises does God make to us! "Exceeding great and precious" they are (2 Pet. i. 4). They begin with his guidance and presence through life, and they culminate in everlasting joy and glory at his right hand. We often need to have recourse to the promises of our Divine Saviour. When we do resort to them, and do draw upon them, we find a bountiful sufficiency for all our need.—C.

Ver. 10 (latter part).—*The Divine response: its righteousness and riches.* I. **THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE RESPONSE.** David had it in his heart to build God a house, but he did not actually do so. Yet God honoured his intention, and met it by the response intimated in the text: "The Lord will build thee an house." In this we can recognize the act of a righteous God—righteous because (1) the essence of any act is in the intention of the agent; (2) the intention of the human mind is often defeated by irresistible obstacles. We are not responsible for the event. With David, in this instance, the direct Divine prohibition was interposed. With us, insuperable obstacles often intervene, and the result is not ascribable to anything but the limitation of our faculties. Our righteous God accepts, approves, honours, not indeed barren and worthless sentiment, but an earnest desire and honest intention to please and serve him. This may be in our personal, family, or Church relations.

II. **THE AMPLITUDE (OR RICHES) OF THE DIVINE RESPONSE.** David desired to build for God a house. God replied to his servant, "I will build thee an house." The house which David wished to build was one of stone and wood, of silver and gold; but that which the Divine Giver purposed to build was far more precious. It was a *human* house; it was the elevation of the king's children and of their children to honour and power and influence; it was a bestowment of a kind and character which in its nature far outweighed the gift which the servant of Jehovah proposed to present. God's response had a Divine largeness, amplitude, wealth, answering to his beneficent and bountiful nature. Thus does he meet his children now. He makes us to know the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of his responsiveness in the gospel of Christ. He acts toward us in the spirit of the promise in Mark x. 28—30. He responds (1) to our *penitence* with free forgiveness and full reconciliation; (2) to our *trust* with constant guidance, provision, guardianship, "all our journey through"; (3) to our *prayer* with the indwelling of his own Divine Spirit; (4) to our *faithfulness* during the brief period of time with everlasting glory.—C.

Vers. 16—18.—*Our relation to God.* The attitude which David assumed and the words of devotion he uttered on this occasion are suggestive of the relation in which we stand to our Creator and Redeemer. We gather—

I. **THAT WE CANNOT BE LED TO A BETTER STATE THAN A DEEP SENSE OF OUR NOTHINGNESS AND THE DIVINE GREATNESS.** When Nathan had delivered his message David placed himself in the posture of deliberate reflection (ver. 16), and, thus seated, he became possessed of a profound sense of his own unworthiness. "Who am I, O Lord, and what is my house?" etc. (ver. 16). He soon passed on to cherish a deep feeling of God's supremacy. "O Lord, there is none like thee," etc. (ver. 20). This is a most suitable end to any transaction between our God and ourselves. We are then arriving at the truth, reaching a place of spiritual safety, in an attitude that is most becoming, when we are impressed with our own nothingness and with the absolute greatness of our God and Saviour.

II. **THAT GOD NOT ONLY CALLS US TO SONSHIP, BUT TREATS US AS HIS CHILDREN.** "Thou hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree" (ver. 17). This probably means that, in David's thought, God had treated him as one who was most exalted, and who might on that ground look for the largest things. At any rate

it was true—if this be not the exact thought of the obscure passage—that God was treating David in a way which corresponded with the exalted position to which he had called him. And this truth has its illustration in the Divine dealing with all his sons. In the gospel we are all called to be the sons of God (John i. 12; 1 John iii. 2). And having reinstated us in this filial position, our heavenly Father treats us as the reconciled sons and daughters we have become. 1. He confides in us; not laying down a multitude of precepts in detail, but giving us a few living principles to apply for ourselves. 2. He gives us constant access to his person; whenever we will we may approach and address him. 3. He chastens rather than punishes us (Heb. xii. 5-11).

III. THAT GOD HAS CONFERRED ABOUNDING HONOUR ON US IN JESUS CHRIST. David felt that God had put so much honour on him that he did not know how he could ask for more (ver. 18). The utmost desires of his heart were fulfilled. And what more of honour and position could we have asked of God that he has not given us in the gospel of his grace? We are even said to be “kings and priests unto God” (Rev. i. 6). 1. We are children of the heavenly Father: “now are we the sons of God.” 2. We are heirs of God (Rom. viii. 17). 3. We are the friends of Christ (John xv. 14, 15). 4. We are fellow-labourers with the living God, “workers together with him” (1 Cor. iii. 9; 2 Cor. vi. 1; Acts xv. 4). What could we speak more for the honour of his servants?—C.

Vers. 19-24.—*Pleas in prayer.* David was pleading with God, and, in asking him to confirm and establish his word of promise, he made reference to four grounds of appeal. These we may substantially adopt, adding another “all-prevailing plea” which David could not introduce.

I. GOD'S LOVE TO US AS INDIVIDUAL SOULS. “Thy servant's sake” (ver. 19). At other times we read, “For thy servant David's sake;” i.e. for the love which God bore to this servant and son of his. We may ask God to help us because we know he loves us; because he pities us who fear him (Ps. ciii. 13); because he remembers us in our low estate, and counts our tears, and desires our happiness and well-being.

II. HIS OWN DIVINE BENIGNITY AND HONOUR. (Vers. 19, 20, 24.) “According to thine own heart;” that he may act like himself, with the boundless grace and goodness which belong to his Divine nature. “That thy Name may be magnified for ever,” etc. (ver. 24); that all nations may know that thou art a faithful God, continuing thy loving-kindness, and redeeming thy word to the land that is so peculiarly thine own. We may well plead the nature of God as a very strong reason why he should bless us. If he grant our request “according to his own heart,” if he fill our treasury and satisfy our want in accordance with the tenderness of his heart, the strength and bounty of his hand, and to the glory of his Name, we shall be enriched indeed.

III. HIS CARE FOR HIS CHURCH. (Vers. 21, 22.) As David prayed God to fulfil all the good pleasure of his will on account of Israel, whom he had redeemed and attached to himself by his special mercies, so may we ask for all great things to be done for us on account of that Church for which the Son of God suffered and died, which he “redeemed with his precious blood.”

IV. THE DIVINE PROMISE. “The thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant,” etc. (ver. 23; see also ver. 26). We have great promises to plead with God, based on his own inviolable word; and there can be no more solid ground on which to build our hope in prayer to God. There is one additional plea with which we are familiar, but which the King of Israel lived far too soon to urge (see Luke x. 24). We plead with God—

V. THE NAME AND WORK OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. For the sake of him who loved us and gave himself for us, who lived and died on our behalf, we ask for all those blessings we need; for mercy, for acceptance and sonship, for Divine guidance and protection along the path of life, for the indwelling Spirit, for help and blessing in Christian work, for an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven.—C.

Vers. 25-27.—*Our relation to the Divine promise.* I. THAT GOD'S PROMISE DOES NOT EXCLUDE THE PROPRIETY OF OUR PETITION. “Thou hast told thy servant that thou wilt build him an house: therefore thy servant hath found in his heart to pray before thee” (ver. 25). The fact that God has promised to do anything for us is a

reason why we should—not why we should *not*—ask him to give it to us. He has promised to supply all who love him with all needful things (Matt. vi. 32, 33; Phil. iv. 19). But this does not countermand the injunction to pray for our daily bread (Matt. vi. 11). There are many promises of the gift of the Holy Spirit; we are therefore to ask for his outpouring (Luke xi. 13). We are assured that the kingdom of God shall be established in the earth; none the less, but all the more, are we to pray, "Thy kingdom come." God's promise is not to be the excuse for our silence, but the ground of our supplication.

II. THAT GOD'S PROMISE DOES NOT EXCLUDE THE NECESSITY FOR OUR HOLY OBEDIENCE. David affirms in ver. 26 that God has "promised this goodness unto thy servant;" but in ver. 27 his petition shows that he was conscious that something more was needed beyond the bare and simple promise, in order that it might be ultimately and fully realized. And he was right. Obedience was an essential and vital condition. If not expressed, it was always understood. The rending of the kingdom in twain under David's grandson proved only too surely and sadly that this was the case. All God's promises to us are conditional on our loyalty to him. If we are faithful unto death, we shall have his abiding love, his constant care, his gracious blessing, and finally his blissful presence. But we must not be so confident because of the promise that we are negligent of the understood conditions.

III. THAT GOD'S PROMISES ARE OFTEN FULFILLED IN OTHER AND BETTER WAYS THAN WE LOOK FOR. (Ver. 27.) David was assured that, if God blessed, there would be blessedness for ever. He was right; but the good thing in store for him was far different from that which he was presenting to his own mind at the time. Could he have foreseen the speedy rupture of the kingdom, and the captivity after a few generations had come and gone, he might have been sadly disappointed, and his faith might have received a serious shock. But could he have foreseen the way in which the Divine promise was fulfilled at length, could he have realized that One who was "the Son of David" would reign as Prince of peace and Lord of righteousness over all the human world, he would have rejoiced indeed. God's purpose was larger than his servant's thought. So with us. The hope of one period is ever found to be realized further on in another way, at first disappointing but afterwards most satisfying, from that which we expected. Youth is other, and really better, than childhood pictures it; and manhood than youth imagines; and the rest of declining days than laborious prime expects to find it. The promises of life are fulfilled, but in ways which God knows to be far better for us than those which our imagination fancies and our heart desires. And it may be that the heavenly world will prove to be something very different from that which piety has predicted or poetry has sung—different but better; something which will be more fitted for our faculties as they are at first unclothed and clothed upon, as death is first swallowed up of life.—C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The house of the Lord: David and Nathan.* The event recorded in this chapter must have been separated from the events of the previous chapter by a period of several years. It is in all essential points identical with the parallel account in 2 Sam. vii., the differences being of a purely formal kind. The contrast which David felt between his own dwelling and that of the ark of the covenant awakened within him a feeling of sorrow, and led him to resolve to put an end to it by building for the latter a house worthy of it. This was a right feeling, and was commended by the Lord (see 1 Kings viii. 18). But though right in itself, and indicating a true state of heart towards God, it was for other reasons not in accordance with the Divine will. David had been man of war, and had shed much blood, and on this ground God would not allow him to carry out the desire of his heart. David communicated his desire to Nathan the prophet. The prophet, knowing well the character of David and his devotion of heart to the Lord, and that the Lord was with him in all that he did, said, out of the impulse of his heart, "Do all that is thine heart; for God is with thee." From this we learn how a man's heart may be right with God, how all that he purposes to do may be highly commendable, but for other reasons it may not be for God's glory that the Lord may use him. It may be more for that glory that he may be passed over and another be preferred. Man proposes but God disposes. Not even a prophet can step in between. Observe another truth here. How graciously David allows himself to be passed over

and that another should have the honour! This is often hard to bear. Nothing but the grace of God ruling in a man's heart can enable him to do this. Moses endured forty years' trial and hardship in leading God's people out of Egypt, and yet just as he gets in sight of the promised land all his brightest anticipations are to be unrealized, and another steps in to reap the reward. David had formed the kingdom, fought the battles of the Lord, and brought up the ark to its resting-place; but just as he is about to reap a full reward in seeing the temple built for the Lord, his son is to step in and enjoy it, while David, like Moses, is to lie down and die. Life is full of unrealized anticipations; but in the case of God's people all to be realized in a brighter and better world, to a degree that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive." Oh for grace to be passed over, nay, even to rejoice in being passed over, and that others should receive the honours for which we have toiled, provided only that it is God's will and for his glory! Oh to be nothing, *nothing*; only a "vessel fit for the Master's use," to be used by him when he will, how he will, and where he will! This should ever be the Christian's desire and prayer.—W.

Vers. 3-15.—*God's message to David.* Though David was not to build the house of the Lord, God gives him "great and precious promises" with respect to his posterity and to the future glory of his people Israel. We see here that there is one thing nearer to the heart of our God than an outward building, however grand it may be. "I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another." The Lord loves to be identified with his children in all their circumstances, however lowly those circumstances may be. "I dwell with the humble and contrite heart." This is the joy of the Lord's heart, and it comes infinitely before a grand house or a magnificent palace. Mark further the prophetic character of God's message (see ver. 9). I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be *moved no more*; neither shall the children of wickedness *waste them any more*, as at the beginning." Israel has been "moved" and "wasted" since this promise was made, and is being "moved" and "wasted" at the present moment. It is clear, therefore, that this is an unfulfilled prophecy of blessing yet in store for wasted and scattered Israel. That time is at hand. When "the Lord shall set his hand the *second* time [it was done the *first* time by Cyrus the Persian] to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea." And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah *from the four corners of the earth*" (Isa. xi. 11, 12). Mark another truth: "And it shall come to pass, when thy *days* be expired that thou *must* go to be with thy *fathers*." Three thoughts are suggested by this passage. 1. Man lives by *days*, not by *years*. "As thy *days*, so shall thy strength be;" "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the *days*." We speak of *years* and look forward to them. God would teach us that we have only days to count on, and should therefore use each one for him. 2. "Thou *must* go." David was *wanted* in another world. There are places to fill there. Just as the stones that were to form the temple on Mount Zion were hewn, shaped, and polished in Lebanon, and were *sent for* just as they were *wanted*, so is it with the departure of every true child of God. What may be the nature of the employments we cannot tell; but of each one who is taken we may hear the Lord's voice saying of him to the weeping ones left behind, "He *must* go," for he is *wanted* there." 3. "Thou *must* go to be with thy *fathers*." It is a *family gathering*. In the Old Testament how frequently is this word used! It is not death. It is—"gone to join the *family gathering*." "Dead" is the Bible word for those out of Christ. "Asleep" is the word for God's children. What a precious word! It is a striking contrast to our word "dead" which is always on the lips. It is like another word we use. A manufacturer looks upon his men and women in his employ and regards them as *goods*, and calls them "hands"—"so many *hands*." The Bible word is "souls"—"the *souls* he had gotten in Haran." How sadly men have departed from the spirit of patriarchal days! Vers. 12-14 are manifestly a reference to the Messiah, of whom Solomon was a type, and to the Messianic times of rest yet to come, of which his reign was a shadow. It is clear from David's prayer (ver. 17) that

he so understood them, especially when he speaks of God having regarded him “according to the estate of a man of high degree.”—W.

Vers. 16—27.—David's prayer. God's great and precious promises to David drew forth from his heart this prayer. It is so at all times. The constraining motive of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving is God's great mercy and wondrous love contained in the “exceeding great and precious promises” to the soul. We see also David's great humility: “Who am I, and what is mine house?” God's grace always humbles. We see also how David exalts God—another effect of God's great and precious promises: “O Lord, there is none like thee, neither is there any God to be compared with thee.” And all this grace in God is “according to all that we have heard.” Every experience of the believer at all times confirms the Divine testimony of God in his Word. He is ready to exclaim as he reads, “It is all true, all of it, and I have found it so.” And this God is moreover “the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel and a God to Israel.” He is not only the God of his people, but a God to them, to *each one*. He is all that his name means to each one of his family. And mark David's closing words. “Let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may be *before thee* for ever.” This is the end for which we should ask any blessing—that we ourselves may be *before him*, walk before him and live before him. “Walk before me and be thou perfect,” was his word to Abraham of old, and still is to each one of his people; and it is only as God's promises and God's blessings lead to this that they can be *real* blessings.—W.

Ver. 1.—God's dwelling-place and man's. This verse shows us the good man's proper anxiety to have his God better housed than himself. We may properly assume that David thought about this matter immediately after his success in bringing the ark of God to Mount Zion, and restoring the ancient service. When David had taken the city of Jerusalem, and proposed to make it the capital of his kingdom, he found a royal palace was as important as safe fortifications. The erection of this palace indicates the new era which dawned in David. The previous king, Saul, did but make a beginning of a kingdom, and was little more than the previous judges had been. David is the proper founder of the Jewish kingdom. It appears, from 2 Sam. v. 11, that David's alliance with Hiram of Tyre enabled him to secure Phoenician artists, workmen, and materials for his palace; and this may have been necessary because the Israelite work-people had no training for such work, and no experience of such buildings as David required. The one point on which David's thought more especially rests is, that a character of *permanency* and *abiding rest* attached to his own house, while God's earthly dwelling-place was still a movable and perishable tent. He very properly felt that there should be a closer harmony between the two, and God's house suggestive of associations suitable to a settled and permanent kingdom. We may never be indifferent to the “sense of fitness” in Divine things.

I. THE SENSE IN WHICH GOD MAY HAVE AN EARTHLY DWELLING-PLACE. See the teaching of Isa. lxvi. 1, 2. There is a proper sense in which the created world may be called “God's dwelling-place.” There is a much higher sense in which the heart of man may be so called. But, seeing that an external and ceremonial worship is found to be necessary for man, and earthly things may wisely be made the symbols of Divine truths and relations, place is made for the work of the architect and the builder in expressing religious truth by sacred edifices, churches, or temples. We, however, need to watch lest any building should limit our thought of God, as though he could be wholly contained within it; or as though we could put human limitations to his revelations, or to himself. God permits us to raise temples for him mainly that we may have, carried home to our hearts, the conviction of his *permanently dwelling* with us. His house is with us; his home is here; he does not come and go; he is with us always.

II. THE DUTY DEVOLVING ON MAN TO FIND FOR GOD AN EARTHLY DWELLING-PLACE. This is not a duty directly enjoined, but one recognized and felt by the sincere and pious soul. It is like the duty of worship, and follows of necessity upon it. Explain that man cannot satisfy himself with the conception of God as *spiritual*, and that he wants material help even to realize this. Also the very sense of appropriating God leads to desire to fix him to a house. Illustrate by Gen. x. 17. Show that in all ages

this sense of the duty of "localizing" God has influenced men to plant sacred groves, consecrate hill-tops, raise tabernacles or temples, and build—at cost of amazing labour and sacrifice—magnificent churches and cathedrals. Impress the duty of aiding in the erection and maintenance of Divine sanctuaries.

III. THE RELATION BETWEEN SUCH DIVINE EARTHLY DWELLING-PLACES AND THE DWELLINGS OF THE MEN WHO MAKE THEM. This is David's point. He felt that one ought to match the other; and if there was any "best," that should be for God. Tent was fitting enough while the people were tent-dwellers. But a house was needed now the people dwelt in houses; and a palace, a magnificent house, now the king dwelt in a palace. Illustrate the relations which should now be maintained between the architecture and decorations of our houses and of God's house. Show what a help to the conception of our kinship with God, and to what we may call the humanity in God, is found in the erection of a house for him. Lead on to show by Paul's teaching that man may be *himself* the temple of the Holy Ghost.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—Unfitness for some parts of God's work. God sent a distinct refusal of David's request by the Prophet Nathan. "Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in." But this refusal may not be regarded as an act of *mere sovereignty*; it was based upon the Divine recognition of the unfitness of David as the instrument for this particular work. Much he might do for God, but this he may not do; and the disability even followed upon his very fitness for the other work which God had called him to do. He was a man of war. His work had been the extending and settling of the new kingdom. But the "man of blood" must give place to the "man of rest," to whom could be more wisely committed the work of building a temple for God. We are here taught that God's work, which he would have done on earth, is divided into *pieces*; that one piece only is usually committed to the trust of each man; that every man finds he has one such trust, and that all the pieces and parts fit together, and make up one great whole of Divine purpose. There is a Divine arrangement of the pieces. There is a Divine allotment of the pieces to individuals. And this involves the selection of individuals upon a Divine recognition of particular gifts and endowments. Then a man may be either *fitted* or *unfitted* for some positions and for some work; and God will, by his providence, guide each man to the work that he may hopefully do; and no man has occasion to envy the place or work of another man.

I. MAN MAY WISH FOR SPHERES OF SERVICE. God does not reproach David for *wishing* to build the temple. He now says, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart." It is a good sign that we want to serve; though so often it is only a sign of our restlessness in the work we have, and our foolish fancying that some one else's work is better, or easier, or nobler than our own. Faithful doing of present duty may be quite consistent with earnest desire to do something else and better, provided it finds expression, as David's did, in patient waiting on God, and earnest prayer for Divine direction.

II. MAN MAY BE UNDER DISABILITIES WHICH HINDER HIM FROM THE SPHERES HE SEEKS. Such disabilities may arise out of *natural disposition and character*; *educational conditions*; *local circumstances*; or, as in David's case, out of the very *life-work* which may be entrusted to us. When we remember how actions bear the stamp of the character of those who perform them, and men receive their impressions of the thing itself from the person who does it, we realize how God may properly refuse to permit us to do just the work we may wish to do. We need to satisfy ourselves that God knows both *us* and our *work*, and so can fitly match the two together, and keep us from unfitting spheres.

III. THE GREAT SECRET OF OUR DUTY IS THE DOING WELL WHAT WE PLAINLY HAVE TO DO. Forming a very high value of our present trust. Quite sure that it is the very thing for us; and cherishing the assurance that God makes our work fit into the work that others do, and that the very thing which we would like to have done ourselves, God gets done in his own time and way, and by the agents he pleases. "One planteth, another watereth," and God gives the increase that crowns the union of various labourers and labours.

We may learn: 1. The lesson of submissive obedience to the Divine appointments. 2. The importance of keeping our minds free from all envy of other workers, even of

those who seem to be doing the very work which we would like to have done. 3. And to be thankful for the work that is entrusted to us; quick to discern the dignity and importance of it; and supremely anxious that we should be found of God faithful in the doing of it.—R. T.

Vers. 5, 6.—*God's earthly dwelling-place a tabernacle, not a house.* In the Divine reply sent to David it is made an important point that God had hitherto dwelt in a tent, and had expressed no desire for a more permanent form of habitation. As the message is given in 2 Sam. vii. 6, God had "walked in a tent and in a tabernacle;" the term "tent" properly indicating an erection of curtains and ropes, and the term "tabernacle" a somewhat more stable structure of boards. In either case the point of comparison is the *movableness* of the building God had hitherto used, and the *fixity* of the one which David now proposed to raise. The verses indicate that permanency in the symbol of the Divine presence is not *offered by God*, but *sought by man*. It would seem that there is some peril in the settledness of things—even in the thought of the Divine presence—for sinful man. His conditions and his associations had better be changing and transitory. Permanence can only belong to that which is "perfect" and "holy." Again and again this reproach has rested on men: "Because they have no changes, therefore they forget God." It may also be shown that elaboration of the external, artistic form and beauty in the house itself has always for man this peril, that it may satisfy him, and take away his thought from that spiritual reality of which it is the expression. Religious symbols assume a certain amount of religious culture and sensitiveness to the spiritual; if they become of value to us for their own sakes, they are mischievous as was the old brazen serpent, and spiritual reformers may well call them "Nehushtan," worthless brass. None seem to have valued the old tabernacle for its own sake, but in after days men thought the temple sacred, and assumed the peculiar acceptableness of prayer offered within its courts, when the Shechinah glory had passed away from its holy place.

I. A TABERNACLE BETTER REPRESENTED MAN'S BODY THAN A HOUSE COULD DO. See St. Paul's figure in 2 Cor. v. 1—3. Illustrate such analogies as these: A tent is *frail*; easily *taken down*, and removed; seriously affected by *storms*, and manifestly *decaying* swiftly.

II. A TABERNACLE BETTER REPRESENTED MAN'S LIFE. Especially in its *lasting* but a little while—

"Brief life is here our portion;
Brief sorrow, short-lived care;"

and in its changeableness. The shepherd's tent is set up but for the shelter of a night; journeying on to find fresh pastures, he knows not where he may be on the morrow. So in our life on earth we can seldom gain the security that we may rest. Again and again, so unexpectedly, the moving pillar-cloud bids us be up and away.

III. A TABERNACLE WAS MORE SUGGESTIVE OF DIVINE ADAPTATIONS TO MAN'S CIRCUMSTANCES. As an easily movable thing, it could be where it was most wanted: sometimes in the centre of the camp, while the people tarried in one spot; at other times in the front of the camp, when the people journeyed; and at another time in the midst of the divided Jordan, holding back, as it were, the waters until the people passed over. Yet in this there was a peril of misuse, for, in their wilfulness, the people sent for the ark to their camp, seeking to make it a mere charm to ensure their victory, and in consequence the symbol of God's presence fell into the hands of the enemy. No one would have thought of taking the ark away from the fixed and permanent temple.

IV. A TABERNACLE WAS LESS LIKELY TO TAKE ATTENTION OFF FROM GOD HIMSELF THAN A HOUSE WAS. For this, which may be the lesson to impress in conclusion, see passage in the introduction to this homily, and also the previous sketch on ver. 1.—R. T.

Vers. 7—10.—*God's grace magnified in David's history.* Every age of the world and every nation has had its prominent men, its striking instances of Divine endowment and special mission. But we mistake such special cases if we assume that they are intended to absorb our attention, or merely to magnify individuals. They are always

designed to be impressive illustrations of great principles which are surely working, though not so manifestly working, in the smaller and the quieter spheres. The "great" is never set before us for its own sake, but always (1) to show us what "almighty grace can do;" and (2) to make solemn the possibilities of our smaller and feebler lives. The mission of all biographies is expressed in two sentences from St. Paul's writings: "They glorified God in me" (Gal. i. 24); "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. i. 16). David is set before us as a striking instance of Divine grace overshadowing, guiding, and sanctifying a whole life. God reminds him in these verses of his "gracious goodness" which had ever rested upon him; and with the remembrance comforts him under the refusal of his request which God judged it necessary to send. In this light the life of David may be reviewed.

I. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GRACE IN DAVID'S SELECTION. Carefully distinguish between *sovereignty* and *favouritism*. There is "no respect of persons" with God. He elects, not upon particular affections for an individual, but upon omniscience of fitness for particular work. Election is not to privilege but to service, and to privilege through the service. Here, in the case of David, Divine sovereignty is seen in the selection of one who was not at all in men's thoughts, and was indeed in circumstances which seemed to indicate *unsuitability*. David was the youngest of his family, somewhat despised by his grown-up brothers, and engaged in simple shepherding work among the hills of Judah. Yet God estimated character, and found in the young shepherd the founder of a kingdom and a dynasty. Illustrate the Divine call of men to be poets, artists, preachers, reformers, and rulers; and show that now, as truly as ever, God calls those he needs to come up out of lowly and unknown places to do his work. And he may have need of us.

II. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GRACE IN DAVID'S PROSPERITY. "Faithful is he who calleth you, who also will do it." To the position to which he was called David in due time attained; because, whenever God bids a man do a thing, he gives the needed grace for the doing. If he tells a man with a helpless hand to "stretch forth his hand," he gives the strength for such stretching forth. Trace in David's life how all hindrances and difficulties were surely overcome; his "enemies were cut off," his throne established, and his name honoured (ver. 8).

III. THE BENEDECTIONS OF GRACE RESTING ON OTHERS FOR DAVID'S SAKE. It is one of the best signs of Divine acceptance of us that others are blessed through us. This exceeding joy our Lord Jesus Christ had. For his life-work of loving service he was "highly exalted." So David was the means of settling the people, introducing all the advantages of order and good government, and restoring to full vigour the worshippers side of the national religious life.

IV. THE CONTINUANCE OF GRACE ON DAVID'S DESCENDANTS. The man who lives in the grace of God himself may be sure that not only God's grace will abide when he is gone, but that the grace will still use his influence and example, as agency, for the blessing of the children for a long while to come (vers. 10-12).

Apply to that exceeding great grace which is manifested in our personal redemption. That grace, we may be sure, will cover and hallow *all our lives*, and *all our children's lives*, even as it did the life of David, and the story of his descendants.—R. T.

Vers. 11-15.—*The purposes of God concerning Solomon.* In the Divine communication made to David through the Prophet Nathan, there is a tone of very tender consideration, and an evident desire to solace and comfort the aged servant of God, whose request it was found necessary to refuse. In one way the desire of his heart could be met. He should have an immortality in his descendants and in his dynasty. He should live on in his son, and accomplish even his purpose concerning the temple. And he may have, before he dies, the comforting assurance that God's purposes were set upon his son, and the Divine favour would overshadow his reign. Those gracious Divine purposes are indicated in these verses. Man's brief life on the earth, which so seldom permits him to accomplish any great thing, would be very painful to him were it not for the hope he cherishes that he will live on in his children, and by them his great life-work may win completion. We cannot bear to think that death cuts off our

influence and spoils our work. Man can scarcely say a thing that hurts him more in the saying than this, "My purposes are broken off." What is called *fame* that be won by but the few among even good men; but every true-hearted and earnest servant of God may be sure that his personal impress is an abiding one; it will get its continuance in those who have known him and live after him; his spirit, his principles, his witness, even in measure his experience will be still working. Philips Brooks well says, "No man or woman of the humblest sort can really be strong, gentle, pure, and good, without the world being the better for it, without somebody being helped and comforted by the very existence of that goodness." Illustrate how a man lives on in a book he has written, or a building he has raised. So a man lives on, oftentimes, in the son who takes up his work. David really lived on in Solomon, and did, in fact, build the temple, seeing that Solomon used the materials he had gathered, and carried out the plans which he had arranged. It is interesting to notice what in the temple which was actually reared was due to the genius and consecration of David, and what in it bore the personal stamp of Solomon. "The design fixed upon indicates fully the spirit of the times and of the king. A general relation to the older tabernacle must be carefully preserved—the outline of the form, the proportions, and the principal division of the building into holy place and most holy must be continued; but where Moses permitted ornamentation and decoration it was developed, and almost carried to an extravagant extent." In view of God's unfolding to David his purposes concerning Solomon, we may learn that it is full of comfort to the man who is passing away from earth to be assured that his son will virtually have—

I. **His work to do;** at least, in its more prominent and important aspects. Certainly his work in the large sense of living for God, and doing his will.

II. That he will have, if he seeks it, the same **GRACE FOR THE DOING.** God's years are throughout all generations, and will give our children the joy and help of the same fatherly relations that he has given us (ver. 13).

It may be shown that, still, saints pass away from earth, made willing to leave their life-work incomplete, and their most cherished desires unfulfilled, and restfully saying in their hearts, "God's grace remains, though I pass away. That grace is working on, and working out, the great purpose, and will surely raise up other agencies." David may die, but he may know this—the temple will be built; the kingdom he had founded shall be secured, and even for him the veil shall be uplifted, and he shall see the glory of this Divine purpose. In a high and spiritual sense David's kingdom shall, in his greater Son, be established for ever and ever.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—The humbling influence of the Divine goodness. Precisely the position and the attitude of David we cannot with certainty explain. The expression *came* indicates that he left his palace and crossed over within the tabernacle precincts. But we have no means of knowing whether he sat in the court facing the sacred tent, or whether he was permitted to go within the sacred curtains, and face the entrance to the holy of holies, where the ark was. It is possible that the king may have claimed priestly rights so far as to enter the holy place. His attitude is explained by some knowledge of Oriental customs. "One of the postures by which a person testifies his respect for a superior is by sitting upon his heels, which is considered as a token of great humility." The sitting was really half-sitting and half-kneeling, so as to rest the body upon the heels. The Talmudists say (but apparently only on the authority of this passage) that none may pray sitting except only the kings of the house of David. But we fix attention on the spirit in which David responded to the very gracious message which God sent to him, and in his spirit we find an example well worthy of our imitation. God's goodness brought home to him a sense of his own unworthiness, and filled him with wonder that he should be made such a monument of mercy. The goodness of God humbles true hearts much more than does his frown. Its right work is to "lead us to repentance." The following points are suggested by this example:—

I. **WITH GOD FAR OFF, MAN MAY GROW PROUD.** He can then see nothing but his own doings.

II. **WITH GOD NEAR, MAN BOWS IN REVERENT AWE,** as is seen in Abraham, Moses, Job, Isaiah, and St. John.

III. **GOD SPEAKING WORDS OF GRACE HUMBLES MAN INTO PENITENCE AND HUMILITY.**

Gifts are always humbling, because they awaken the sense of desert. So Divine gifts are ever most humbling.—R. T.

Vers. 20, 21.—*The uniqueness of the Divine dealings.* David saw plainly a truth which seems equally plain to us from the records given in the Scriptures, that God's ways of dealing with the nation of Israel had been throughout singular, unique, and surprisingly gracious. A few illustrative instances from the history may be given. But this is precisely the impression which each one of us receives upon a review of our own lives. The Divine dealings with us seem, in the preciseness of their adaptations, and the tenderness of their grace, quite unique; and it seems, to the sincere heart, that nobody can sing just such a thankful, happy song as he can. Now on earth, and much more yonder, we shall adore that special grace which is so manifest in our individual lives.

I. DIVINE DEALINGS ARE ALWAYS THE SAME. Very much is made in these days of the uniformity and absolute working of *law* in the physical spheres. But we can more than match the truth by our teachings respecting the uniformity and the absolute working of law in the moral and spiritual spheres. Sin always carries its consequences. Personal influences on others can be as strictly assured as laws of nature. St. Paul boldly affirms that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The forces God brings to bear on men are always the same. There is but one gospel for man's redemption. Nobody can come to God save by the way of penitence and faith and prayer. The truth may be applied to the minutest conditions and circumstances of life. There is nothing new in the circumstances, and God will deal with us in them exactly as he dealt with our fathers. Because of this uniformity of Divine dealings in the moral spheres, we can use the experiences of the fathers, and be warned, encouraged, or taught by the records left of their life-histories and the Divine dealings with them. No right-minded man would ever wish any deviation from either the eternal principles or practices for his sake. He would rather just be in the *Divine order*, within the conditions and provision of the infinitely wise and infinitely good Divine law. We require to press this point, because fanaticism has often assumed that God steps aside of his laws to deal in special ways with favoured individuals. There is a sense in which Divine dealings are special, but it is of the utmost importance that we gain first hold, and firm hold, of the truth that God's ways are orderly and regular, fixed and unalterable, because settled in the infinite Divine wisdom. It may be necessary here to deal with the idea of a *miracle*. It may be said, "Does not God work miracles? And has he not worked them for individuals?" We are coming more clearly to see that a miracle is not a contravention of law, but only a modification of the workings together of law, made apprehensible by man. Thus God's law of the vintage is that vines bear grapes. Man's apprehension of the law is that vines bear grapes *in so many months*. Christ's miracle shows us that man's *time-law* is no essential part of the law; the vintage may come in what man calls a moment. Christ's miracles contravened no laws, if the laws be relieved of man's additions to them.

II. DIVINE DEALINGS BECOME UNIQUE BY ADAPTATION TO THE INDIVIDUAL. We must never conceive of law as if it were working distinct from the Lawgiver. It is not like an "act of parliament," which is passed, and then set free to its work. Law, in its proper sense, is the condition on which the Lawgiver acts. And God acts as a Father, with special knowledge and care of each individual, and due adjustment of law to each case. I am individual to myself, individual and unique. And I may hold the confidence that God will deal with me just as if no other being lived. The uniformity of moral law has this sublime qualification, "The Lord *knoweth* them that are his."—R. T.

Vers. 22-24.—*The eternity of David's kingdom.* It seems quite evident that the term "for ever" is used in the Scripture as a figure of speech, and one which carries with it several distinct suggestions. It is a condition of human thought that we must set things in the order of time; and it is usual for us to estimate the value of things according to the time they will last. The words "eternal" and "for ever" and "everlasting" often stand for long continuance. Mountains that outlast the generations are called "everlasting hills." Canaan was given to Israel as an "everlasting possession." So here, in these verses, God promises a throne to David, an eternal kingdom, a pos-

terity that will never be extinguished; and the first idea we should attach to the promise is that David and his descendants' empire should be of long duration, and of a stable character. It is a further truth, embodied in the expression, that the material kingdom of David should by-and-by pass into the spiritual kingdom of David's greater Son, and that in him should be established that spiritual theocracy which could be, and should be, absolutely eternal, enduring as long as there should be a God to rule, and creatures of God to be ruled. Taking the Old Testament term "for ever," we may see what thoughts are properly suggested by it, and consider them in their advancing order.

I. "For ever" means LASTING THROUGH MANY GENERATIONS. Matching the idea concerning "length of life" is the idea of "continuance and permanence of dynasty." To live long was, to the Jewish mind, the direct reward of virtue, a sign of the Divine recognition of personal goodness. And so the pious king who founded a kingdom passed the thought on to the life of his race. Its prolongation through many generations would be the proof of Divine favour and acceptance resting upon it. Show how the writer of a book seeks fame in the continuity of its influence. The rich man, nowadays, hopes to found a family which shall outlast the generations. And this desire for permanence of influence is found, in various measures, influencing all men. So still God can promise to us that noble living and faithful working shall be made to bear the "eternal" stamp. In this first sense the good man never dies; on earth he may be said to live "for ever." David lives on to-day. He influences men now, rules hearts and lives, more truly than ever.

II. "For ever" means UNDER CHANGED FORMS LASTING THROUGH ALL HUMAN GENERATIONS. We must find what is the very essence of David's kingdom, for the notion of its eternity can properly only be applied to that. The essence is this—God's immediate rule of men through the administration of man. David's kingdom was this—the theocracy practically realized. Then all that belonged to the mere human form and order may change to meet the exigencies of changing ages; the essence would remain, and by-and-by appear in the theocracy of the Church, in the administration of the exalted *Man* Christ Jesus. We now are members of David's everlasting kingdom; since Christ's kingdom is essentially David's. In its central principle—its spiritual principle—of direct governmental relations with Jehovah, David's kingdom must last absolutely for ever and ever.

III. "For ever" has this limitation—**IN ITS EARTHLY FORM IT IS DEPENDENT ON THE ALLEGIANCE OF DAVID'S DESCENDANTS TO THE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE.** So far as their earthly features are concerned, God's promises are always conditional. And the condition is always the same. It is *loyalty*, full loyalty, the obedient service of the true-hearted. This point David anxiously impressed on his son Solomon (ch. xxviii. 9, 10).

Work out the conditions of *perpetuity* still. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." And show what is the assurance of our earthly and our heavenly "for ever." We shall live on *here*, we shall live on *yonder*, in what we have been for God, and done for him, in his grace and strength.—R. T.

Ver. 24.—God's relation to his people. I. The relation which God bears to his people. 1. He has chosen them out of the world, which lieth in wickedness. 2. He has given himself to them in a peculiar way. 3. He avows that relation to them before the whole universe.

II. Inquire what, under that relation, we may expect at his hands. 1. The care of his providence. 2. The communication of his grace. 3. The manifestations of his love. 4. The possession of his glory.

III. What, under that relation, he is entitled to expect from us. 1. That we "be a people to him." 2. That we give ourselves to him, as he has given himself to us.

Conclude with two proposals: 1. That we, at this very hour, accept Jehovah as our God. 2. That we now consecrate ourselves to him as his people (Rev. C. Simeon, M.A.).—R. T.

Ver. 26.—The faithful Promiser. David pleads before God the fact of his having promised; he reminds God of his own Word. But he does more than this. He testifies his perfect confidence that the promise will be fulfilled *because of what God is*. "Thou,

Lord, art God"—there is his rest. It is much to have received a gracious promise, but it is much more to have, and to trust, a "faithful Promiser." The promises help and comfort us; but we want to rise above even the promises, and find the "eternal life," and deep "heart-rest" of *knowing God*, and being able to say to him, "Now, Lord, thou art God."

I. THE VALUE OF A PROMISE DEPENDS UPON THE PROMISE-MAKER. This may be efficiently illustrated from our ordinary life-associations. Some men's promises we never heed, never depend upon, because we know *them*, and know that they promise hastily or thoughtlessly; or they have formed the habit of getting out of seeming difficulties by a promise which puts off the evil day. (This tradesmen too often do.) Other men's promises we implicitly trust, because we *know them*, and know that they count promises to be sacred, and only fail to keep them by some unexpected disabilities, or some physical impossibilities. It may be shown that the value of a promise does not depend on *its subject* or on *its form*; it would be no surer if confirmed with the most terrible oaths. It depends on the character first, and then on the ability, of him who makes it; and we inquire concerning him both *can* he perform and *will* he perform it? Our confidence or otherwise is in *him*; and it may be shown that the confidence rests very much more upon his *character*, which is the essential thing, than upon his mere *ability*, which is the accidental thing. We never really trouble over promises whose fulfilment circumstances may prevent. We feel the bitterness of broken promises when the failure reveals the weak will, or the unsound character of those in whom we have trusted. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help."

II. GOD'S PROMISES GAIN THE INFINITE VALUE OF BEING FROM THE DIVINE PROMISE-MAKER. This is David's point of assurance, "Thou art God," and thou "hast promised," therefore in thy promise I put absolute and perfect confidence. And what is gathered up in this simple but most comprehensive expression, "Thou art God"! 1. "Thou art God" who *hast been faithful*. So the saints of all the ages testify. So David himself could both feel and say. 2. "Thou art God," and *as God thou must be faithful*. Show what is necessarily included in the very *idea* of God, and that *faithfulness* is absolutely essential. If we could show one broken Divine promise, we would dethrone God and make him take rank with fallible man. "Hath he spoken, and shall he not do it?" 3. We may advance to a higher region, and say, "Thou art God" who, *in giving Christ, hast so kept the great promise as to assure all other promises*. St. Paul forcibly argues, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32).

Then we may set forth how God's promises cover and hallow all our earthly life, coming into precise adaptation to all our infinitely varying circumstances and needs. And so we may walk and work in the light and cheerful joy of this confidence—all are trustworthy; all will gain wise and gracious fulfilment, since "he is faithful that promised," and he speaks *calmly* over our life's tumult, saying, "Be still, and know that I am God."—R. T.

Ver. 27.—*The blessedness of God's blessings.* David puts his desire and prayer into the one expressive word "bless," and that because he has such a full apprehension of what God's blessing is to his people. "For thou blessest, O Lord, and it shall be blessed for ever." Men ask for the *summum bonum*. David finds it in the enrichment and the satisfying of the Divine goodness. "The blessing of the Lord maketh rich." As the verse on which we are dwelling reads in 2 Sam. vii. 29, "With thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever." The word "bless" is used with great frequency in the Old Testament, and evidently with a variety of meanings. It is difficult to fix upon a definition of the term which will express the essential idea that underlies the diversity of its forms. A distinction, however, is made in Ps. cxlv. 10, "All thy works shall *praise* thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall *bless* thee." From this choice of different terms we may learn that "bless" carries the idea of the *intelligent agent* who knows and loves the object with which he deals, and seeks for gracious adaptations to *feeling* as well as to need. If saints *bless* God, it means that they intelligently and lovingly apprehend the goodness of his dealings, and express their feelings of *thankful love*. If God *blesses* saints, it means that he intelligently considers their con-

ditions, and finds and adapts grace precisely to their needs; and that whatsoever he does for them turns out to be for their ultimate good. We have come to use the term without due consideration, and as a mere formality. It often hides the fact that we have no precise petitions to present; and so we fall back upon the general prayer for blessing. We should be placed in extreme difficulty, if God were to say in reply to our prayer for blessing, "Say precisely what it is you want. Translate your word. Use exact terms. Ask for the very things which press upon your heart. For my blessing is this—the supply of all your needs out of my riches in glory." It may be well to show further what God's blessing would be to a royal house or dynasty, and to a nation or people, noting the special features of that blessing as applied to David's house and kingdom.

I. "BLESS" STANDS FOR ALL KINDS OF REAL GOOD—without venturing to specify any. It may fittingly be used in prayer when we have no specific desires, and only want to run into the shadow of God's goodness. And it may be used when we are in difficulty, and do not even know what things we ought to ask. Sometimes we are afraid to ask definitely lest we should ask amiss; and then we may leave the *form* of the answer with God, only asking him to bless.

II. "BLESS" THROWS THE MATTER WHOLLY BACK ON THE PERSON FROM WHOM THE GOOD IS SOUGHT. Compare the cry of Esau, "Bless me, O my father!" He could not tell what to ask, but left the matter with his father, and with full confidence in the fatherly love. So for us to ask God to bless us should be the expression of our full submission and entire surrender to his wisdom and grace in fixing the form which the good shall take; so it may be—and should be—a fitting expression of the right attitude and spirit of God's people, who trust the whole matter of their temporal and spiritual good to him, and will not even seem to dictate to him. Enough for all true hearts to pray with David, "Let it please thee to bless us," "for with thy blessing shall the house of thy servant be blessed for ever."

III. THE BLESSINGS WHICH GOD FINDS, FOR THOSE WHO THUS FULLY TRUST HIM, MUST MAKE THEM INFINITELY BLESSED. The things God sends will make them blessed, and their gracious moral influence on such recipients will make them double blessings. Christ's miracles of healing were Divine blessings, and the healed ones were doubly blessed, in body and in soul. God's gifts and providences now become double blessings; they order and hallow our lives; they help to meeten us for the "inheritance of the saints in the light." God still blesses with the *eternal* blessings.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The course of last chapter's parallel is continued here, and answers closely to 2 Sam. viii. 1—18. The present chapter contains the wars and victories of David (vers. 1—13), with the arrangements consequent upon them; and (vers. 14—17) an enumeration of some of his chief officers.

Ver. 1.—Took Gath and her towns out of the hand of the Philistines; literally, *her daughters*. The compiler of Chronicles gives us this plain statement where, in the parallel place, we find, "took Metheg-ammah," or more exactly, *Metheg-ha-ammah*, the explanation of which word (see 2 Sam. viii. 1) is not yet ascertained. Its literal signification is "the bridle or curb of the mother city," and may mark a special strong position which commanded Gath, or it may describe Gath as owning itself to such a position. Gesenius understands it to mean

that David "subjected the metropolis of the Philistines to himself," quoting the Arabian proverb, "To give one's bridle to any one," as equivalent to submitting to him. He quotes also Job xxx. 11. It may be noted that Ammah is spoken of (2 Sam. ii. 24) as the name of a hill, otherwise unknown, however. Although David subdued so many places, he reigned over them, *i.e.* over many of them, still by "their own kings" (1 Kings iv. 24; 2 Chron. ix. 26). Hence we find Gath with a king still in 1 Kings ii. 39.

Ver. 2.—Brought gifts; *i.e.* in the light of tribute and of acknowledgment of subjection. There are curious additions to this passage in the parallel place, telling the punishment inflicted on Moab: "He smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them to lie prostrate"; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive." This appears to mean

that he put to death two parts of them, and kept the third part alive. The reason of this deliberate and severe punishment is not stated. Once David and the Moabites had been on very different terms (1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4; but see also Ps. lx. 8).

Ver. 3.—*Hadarezer*; in the parallel places, *Hadadezer*; though our present form is found both in Samuel (e.g. 2 Sam. x. 16) and in other places in Chronicles, yet in all these places some manuscripts show *Hadadezer* (see Gesenius, 'Lexicon,' *sub voce*). *Zobah*. Part of Syria, east of Hamath, and for the most part of Cœlo-Syria, north of Damascus, and stretching in the direction of the Euphrates. Possibly it is one with Ptolemy's *Zake* (1 Sam. xiv. 47; 2 Sam. viii. 3-10; x. 9; 1 Kings xi. 23-25). *Hamath*. In the valley of the Orontes, the northern boundary of the Holy Land. It is traceable from the time of the Exodus (Gen. x. 18; Numb. xiii. 21; xxxiv. 8) to that of the Prophet Amos (Amos vi. 12). Though in Zobah, it is probably *not* the Hamath-Zobah of 2 Sam. viii. 3. To establish his dominion. In the parallel place, "to restore," i.e., no doubt, to endeavour to do so, and that against the growing force of David. He had already suffered at the hand of Saul (1 Sam. xiv. 47, 48).

Ver. 4.—The parallel place (2 Sam. viii. 4) omits, probably by error merely, the word "chariots," and reads for our seven thousand, "seven hundred." As the form of expression in the last two clauses of our present verse is the same in both cases, it is more natural to render, David houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved a hundred, i.e. a hundred horses unhoughed; he houghed all but a hundred. Our Authorized Version, in the parallel, gets over the difficulty by inserting "for," i.e. enough for, "a hundred chariots."

Ver. 5.—The Hebrew text of Damascus, here, next verse, and also 2 Chron. xxviii. 5, spells the word with a *resh*, omitting the *dagesh forte* in the *mem* following, which Gesenius instances (see his 'Lexicon') as the Syriac orthography.

Ver. 6.—The word "garrisons" appears in the text in the parallel place, and would be justly supplied in our Hebrew text here.

Ver. 7.—The shields; Hebrew *כְּשָׂבִיד*. Much doubt has been entertained as to the meaning of this word. Its etymology is uncertain. Gesenius derives it from a root signifying "hardness." For the most part, however, the context of the seven places of its occurrence which he instances (2 Sam. viii. 7; 2 Kings xi. 10; ch. xviii. 7; 2 Chron. xxiii. 9; Cant. iv. 4; Jer. li. 11; Ezek. xxvii. 11) favour the rendering "shields," though the quotation from Jer. li. 11 (literally, "fill ye the shields") is not so

satisfactory. The wealth of Zobah is, of course, illustrated by these shields of gold.

Ver. 8.—*Tibhath*, and . . . *Chun*. These names replace *Betah* and *Berothai* in the parallel place, in the former case with possibility of orthographic explanation, but not in the latter. The purpose for which David was glad to take their brass is not mentioned in Samuel, but only here. The brazen sea, and the pillars, and the vessels of brass (see 1 Kings vii. 14-47; 2 Chron. iv. 1-18). In this latter place these subjects will be found treated more fully. This so-called "brazen sea" (ברֶגֶת מִזְבֵּחַ) took the place in Solomon's temple of the earlier brazen laver (תְּמִימָן) of the Mosaic ritual (Exod. xxx. 17-21; Lev. viii. 10, 11; 1 Kings vii. 38). It is now called a sea, because of its large size. The use of the original laver is plainly told, for the priests to wash at it their hands and feet before offering sacrifices. It stood in the court of the tabernacle, between the altar and the door. The ten lavers of Solomon's temple were used for washing the sacrificial victims themselves (2 Chron. iv. 6). The brazen sea (which was rather of *copper* than brass, however) rested upon twelve standing oxen, three turning their faces to each quarter of the heavens. Its height was five cubits, its diameter ten cubits, the thickness of its metal a handbreadth, and its capacity variously given at two thousand baths (1 Kings vii. 26) or three thousand (2 Chron. iv. 5). It was removed from its supports of oxen by Ahaz (2 Kings xvi. 17), and placed on a pedestal of stone. And it was eventually destroyed by the Assyrians (2 Kings xxv. 13). *And the pillars*. (For these pillars of the porch, named *Jachin* and *Boaz*, see 1 Kings vii. 15-22; 2 Chron. iii. 15-17.) *And the vessels of brass*. (For these, see 1 Kings vii. 40-51; 2 Chron. iv. 16-18.)

Ver. 9.—*Tou*. In the parallel place, spelt *Toi*. Nothing else is known of this King of Hamath, who now proffers his congratulations to David.

Ver. 10.—*Hadoram*. In the parallel place written *Joram*. The Septuagint has the name spelt with *d* in both places, which has led to the suggestion that possibly the real name was *Jedorum*. Josephus suggests that Tou had been brought into subjection by Hadadezer, and wished by his present congratulations and valuable gifts to ingratiate himself with David for a purpose. *Had war*; literally, *was a man of war*; i.e. he had shown his addictedness to war, or had warred abundantly with Tou. It is evident that Tou had generally fared the worst in their encounters.

Ver. 11.—From *Edom*. This is probably the correct reading, and not, as in the paral-

lel, "from Aram," unless, as some think, both places were named in the original authority. From the children of Ammon. Perhaps the events narrated in our succeeding chapter are here referred to by the compiler. From Amalek (see 1 Sam. xxx. 1—20, 26—31).

Ver. 12.—Abishai . . . slew of the Edomites. The parallel place omits to say that it was by aid of Abishai that David slew these eighteen thousand Edomites. They are there called Syrians, which reading is at all events in keeping with the Aram of the previous verse. Abishai, here named son of Zeruiah, possibly served under "Joab son of Zeruiah" (ver. 15), who is spoken of (1 Kings xi. 15, 16) as very trenchant in this Edomite war, without any mention being made of Abishai. Ps. lx. (title) probably speaks of an instalment of the eighteen thousand spoken of here, as the nation now suffered all but extermination. The valley of salt. Situate in Edom (1 Kings xi. 14—17; 2 Kings xiv. 7; 2 Chron. xxv. 11). The word here used for "valley" is *מִקְבָּה* (Ps. xxviii. 4), not the more generic word *מִגְדָּל*, and signifies rather "ravine." The phrase occurs twice with the article expressed, *מִקְבָּה מִקְבָּה*. The place is celebrated also for the achievements of Amaziah (in references just given), who proceeded hence with ten thousand prisoners, to precipitate them down the cliff, i.e. Petra (*פְּטַרָּה*, 2 Chron. xxv. 12). The real situation of this place is still doubtful. Since the time of the German traveller Geethen ('Reisen,' ii. 356), and of Robinson ('Bibl. Res.' ii. 109), it has been generally assumed to be a tract of land extending some six miles south of the Dead Sea, and bounded at that distance by the range of hills which there runs across the country; but beside the consideration that the word "ravine" could not describe that tract of country, there are others very unfavourable to the supposition (see these carefully stated by Grove, in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' iii. 1097).

Ver. 15.—Recorder. The word is of the same root with that in ch. xvi. 4, "to record." The exact duties and position of this officer are not stated in any one place, but may be gathered from 2 Sam. viii. 16; xx. 24; 1 Kings iv. 3; 2 Kings xviii. 18, 37; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 8. From these notices, belonging to somewhat separate times, we may gather the dignity and responsibility and trust of the office which the recorder filled, altogether in excess of his duty as mere historical secretary.

Ver. 16.—Abimelech the son of Abiathar. The reading in the parallel place is, "Ahimelech the son of Abiathar," as also in ch. xxiv. 6; but comparison of 1 Sam.

xii. 20; 2 Sam. xx. 25; 1 Kings i. 7, 8, suggests that the right reading would be "Abiathar the son of Ahimelech." With this Mark ii. 26 agrees, and tells of a correct manuscript, from which, indirectly, the quotation came. Shawsha. The parallel place reads *Seraiaha*; 2 Sam. xx. 25 reads *Sheva*; and 1 Kings iv. 3 reads *Shisha*. The differences are probably due simply to errors of transcription. Scribe. The historical development of this title is obscure, and not easy to trace. The use of some form or other of the root is abundantly frequent from the times of the earliest parts of Scripture, in the sense of "numbering," or "declaring," or "recording." Perhaps our title of "secretary" would answer sufficiently to it, and all the better, because the Old Testament scribes were also of different leading kinds, like in some degree to our various secretaries of state. There was the kind of scribe of Judg. v. 14—where our Authorized Version is far from the mark, and should rather read "the staff of the scribe," in place of "the pen of the writer"—a military officer, whose duty it was to keep the muster-roll. There was the scribe of 2 Kings xxv. 19—a passage which throws light on the former (see also Isa. xxxiii. 18; Jer. iii. 25). There were the scribes of a more literary, lawyer-like, or clerk-like kind, as here, and in the parallel place, and in 2 Sam. xx. 25; 1 Kings iv. 3; ch. ii. 55. In the time of Hezekiah, if not before, the scribes became distinctly a class of men (Prov. xxv. 1; Jer. viii. 8); and the times of the Captivity greatly enlarged their importance. Their exact duties in the best times of the monarchy are not laid down, but the dignified place the king's scribe held is evident from the company in which he is placed here and in the parallel passage.

Ver. 17.—Benaiah the son of Jehoiada (see ch. xi. 22—25; xii. 27; 2 Sam. xxiii. 20—23). The Cherethites and the Pelethites. Two tribes of Philistines whom David attached. The meaning and derivation of these two names leave it possible to translate them at once, and to read, "the public executioners, and the public couriers," not treating them as proper names, and to this course Gesenius (see 'Lexicon') gives his sanction. On the other hand, a comparison of 1 Sam. xxx. 14 and 2 Sam. xv. 18 would lead us to treat them as the names of people, although the Pelethites are not as identifiable in this sense as the Cherethites and Gittites. Anyway, it is evident they were the special guard of the king, and were faithful to David and to Solomon after him. Their duties included those of the executioner or *lictor*, and the courier. They are frequently mentioned on

special occasions of the king's moving, and of danger (2 Sam. xv. 18; xx. 7, 23; 1 Kings i. 38, 44). (chief about the king. The Hebrew text here is כָּנָרָה. The word

used in the parallel place is כָּנָרָה, which signifies strictly "priests," but sometimes more generally "princes." This is, without doubt, the meaning of our text.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-17.—*The chapter that offers the sermons of facts with fewest words.* The chapter which to indifferent reading might seem most bare of religious instruction will yield to careful attention the most forcible lessons. Facts bring the most impressive lessons to our lives. Facts teach the most impressive aspects of the Divine character to our present power of apprehending that character. For all we read and memory retains it, for all we hear and faith believes it, for all we think, and think we see it well and clearly, that which we feel and experience from the hard facts of life or the joyful facts of life performs a thousand times over the largest and most valuable part in our education. This chapter is a narration of facts—almost exclusively this and nothing else. But they were facts full of personal interest to David, and full of illustration of Divine goodness and faithfulness. The chapter tells indeed the simplest tale of events that made the joy of a human life, strengthened the faith of a Divine life, rewarded the endurance and preparation of years past of a suffering and painful life, and gives God the praise that was his due. To notice well such facts is to listen well to God's own sermons. Let us notice how they part here so very naturally into those which illustrate the gracious attributes of the Teacher God, and those which illustrate the better qualities of the learner David. We have here—

I. THE GOD "FAITHFUL AND JUST" TO BRING ON THE TIME OF THE "RECOMPENSE OF REWARD." That time is not always to be expected in the present world. There are sometimes manifest reasons why this cannot be, or why it should not be likely, or why it were even to be deprecated. It is also one of the chieftest distinctions, nay, even the *differentiae* of the Christian temper and essential quality, "to seek for glory and honour and immortality by patient continuance in well-doing," with the eye fixed on one thing alone as the reward—"eternal life." Yet sometimes it is the case that a manifest, ample, revealed recompense of reward comes after trial and sorrow borne, and work earnestly done, even before the partial scene of this present has passed. It is so now. Long had been the discipline of David, frequent the strokes by which heart and life had been smitten, keen and agonizing the misconceptions from which he had suffered, and the misconstructions put upon his generous conduct, and sharply had the iron of disappointment entered into his susceptible nature. But now, 'tis no longer the chapter of accidents; it is the chapter of victories. A series of joyful successes, of triumphs, of honours, came to him. And it was because God "remembered" him and "visited" him and blessed him—no longer with the more hidden mercies proper to the time of preparation and discipline, but with these manifest, published mercies proper to one who had "borne the yoke in his youth," and who had in his measure "seen affliction by the rod of his wrath."

II. THE GOD WHO LENGTHENS OUT HIS PROVIDENTIAL PROTECTION OF HIS SERVANT. How true it is that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance"! He has never forsaken David. He does not weary of him. He does not change for caprice' sake his servant, to use a younger, a fresher, a choicer. No, he keeps by him, and "preserves him whithersoever he" goes. He is his Shield and Buckler and Defence. He guides him by day and guards him by night. He makes his enemies either fall before him or flee before him. He counsels him and surrounds him with faithful counsellors, captains of his armies, priests of the Church. This is the time that, through the goodness of a faithful Providence, his corn and his wine, and his gold and silver, are increased, and a "table is spread before him, e'en in the presence of his enemies." Not a day just now but David feels what a glory it is to be the servant of God, and what safety there is with him.

III. THE CONTINUED FAITHFUL DEVOTION ON THE PART OF THE SERVANT OF HIS LIFE AND POWERS TO HIS GREAT MASTER. His wars are against the enemies of God and the people of God. There is no sign of personal and ambitious objects in what

David is doing. He “reigns over all Israel,” and thus reigning he “executes judgment and justice among all his people.” He does not forget his responsibilities in the time of rank, dignity, luxury, nor surrender himself to indulgence. It is evident he holds himself, still the servant of God, the willing, conscious, intelligent instrument for his use. In undoubted “authority,” his conduct is not that, his bearing is not that, that ever exposes him to the finger of just satire or ridicule—as one who is dressed in a “little brief authority,” and for reality and true dignity satisfies himself with display. The reaction from poverty, persecution, subordination, and grief is not what many bear well. Thus far David has come through the trial well. He bears the burden nobly, even as bravely he listed it to his shoulders; and if God has not forgotten his servant, neither does David show any sign of forgetting that he is God’s servant.

IV. THE UNDIMINISHED INTEREST OF A GREAT RELIGIOUS DEVOTION STILL POSSESSING THE THOUGHT AND HEART OF DAVID. There were no doubt considerations which we may suppose to have been present to the mind of David, in the destined promotion and dignity of Solomon, ancillary to his own continued deep interest in the projected temple. Yet we should not be justified in putting all his sustained devotion down to this source. The project had been a native of his own heart. And he does not mean to disown “the better part” of faith because he is disappointed in sight. David was now one of the honoured rank of those “kings and prophets who desired to see” a certain sight, but died without seeing it. The Pisgah-glimpse possible to him is that which could come of faith indeed, but of faith only. Yet his disappointment has not soured him, his refusal has not turned him sulky. He loves to think of that “habitation of God’s house” still. He can’t envy his own son; and to console nevertheless his disappointment that he shall not see the glorious stones laid one upon another, towering aloft, and the picked cedars, and the gold flashing again in the sun, his thoughts fill the time with collecting, and getting, and giving, and dedicating for these ends. It was always now in David’s thought. The shields of gold and the brass and the silver are all sacred at once in his thought to one purpose. This is some of the noblest of the Divine working in the heart and life that are but human after all. The eye of David shall not see the reared temple, but his thought and purpose and love are laid with its foundations, and reach to its highest pinnacle. And the most magnificent block of its stone, the finest timber of all its cedar, the gold that reflected most brilliantly the light, of all that was in it, may have been those which the eye and the hand too of David did surely and literally touch. Such confidence may all the servants of God entertain.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 6.—*Preservation.* The contrast between the God of the Bible and the gods of the heathen, in respect to moral character, is of the most thorough and striking kind. Amongst other noticeable points of contrast, observe this: the imaginary deities of the superstitious idolaters are usually famed and feared for their destructive qualities, whilst the Lord is ever represented as a God of salvation, delighting to preserve his people. The bloodthirsty Shiva, one of the most widely worshipped gods of the Hindus, is *the destroyer*. Jehovah, it is recorded, “preserved David whithersoever he went.”

I. THE DANGERS of ordinary human life are many. It is not only kings and warriors who are exposed to peril, though the position of monarchs exposes them to the violence of the assassin, and the occupation of the soldier is in itself a challenge to the dart of death; but in every position of life, at every age and in every clime, we walk encompassed by dangers seen and unseen.

II. DIVINE PROTECTION is a truth supported by revelation. Not by reason of favouritism and caprice, not in response to any superstitious observances or entreaties, but in virtue of his own attributes, God is a Protector. He is not satisfied to create, and then to abandon what he has made. His universal providence, general and particular, is the joy and comfort of his people. It is equally shown in their prosperity and their adversity.

III. Hence THE PRESERVATION OF GOD’S PEOPLE FROM HARM. He is their Shield, and Buckler, their Defence, and Fortress. He delivers their eyes from tears, their souls

from death, their feet from falling. The confidence of the psalmist was signal and most instructive (see Ps. xci.). It is a source of security and consolation to know that our times are in God's hands.

“An earthquake may be bid to spare
The man that's strangled with a hair.”

And when Christians fall victims to the hate and hostility of sinners, or are slain by the operation of natural laws, they still have the assurance that no real evil can befall them.

“Angel-guards from thee surround us;
We are safe, for thou art nigh.”

Well may the friend of Jesus exclaim, “I will trust and not be afraid.”

IV. The obligation is plain, GRATEFULLY TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE PRESERVING MERCY of God. The royal psalmist was not backward in recording with adoring gratitude the delivering and upholding mercy of a faithful God. Never should we forget that he that is our God is the God of salvation.—T.

Ver. 11.—*Dedication of gifts.* David was a generous giver. In his many campaigns he won great spoils from his enemies. We need not approve his conduct in all these military expeditions. But we cannot do other than commend the princely generosity which he displayed in the disposal of his booty. Though not himself permitted to build the temple, he was allowed to accumulate treasures to be used by his son and successor in the construction of the sacred edifice. He freely parted with his wealth for this purpose, and for the maintenance of Divine worship in suitable dignity and splendour. His example in thus dedicating gifts to the service of Jehovah is one which all Christians should follow; the more so, as their motives to consecration are more powerful, and their opportunities of service are more numerous.

I. ALL GIFTS ARE OF AND FROM THE LORD. “The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;” “The silver and the gold are the Lord's;” his are “the cattle upon a thousand hills.” We can, accordingly, only offer unto the Lord of what is really his. “Of his own” we give unto him.

II. ALL THAT CHRISTIANS CAN OFFER TO GOD IS THE PURCHASE OF CHRIST'S BLOOD. When our Saviour redeemed us, he ransomed all our powers and possessions. “Body, soul, and spirit” are his of right. It is the Christian's privilege to feel that nothing which he has is his own; all is his Lord's.

III. The gifts of Christians are THE EXPRESSION OF THEIR GRATEFUL LOVE. They do not give to the cause of their Redeemer merely because they feel that they *ought* to do so, but because they delight in any opportunity of showing their affection. The most costly, lavish gifts are poor and worthless, if not the expression of the heart's love and loyalty. When the heart is offered, the meanest gifts are sufficient to represent its love. The “two mites” of the widow were accepted and approved; for they cost her much to give, and yet she gave them with a willing mind.

IV. DEDICATED GIFTS MAY SERVE TO WORK OUT THE SPIRITUAL PLANS OF GOD. Some professing Christians disparage expenditure for religious objects, on the ground that God cannot care for such trifles as our material wealth. But they forget that, in the order of Divine providence, God's kingdom upon earth is mysteriously bound up with both the wealth and the work of men. And they forget that Christ regards what is given to his people and to his cause as given to himself. It is, therefore, an honour to be permitted to dedicate of our substance to ends so lofty, to a Master so gracious.

V. GIFTS OFFERED IN A RIGHT SPIRIT ARE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. There is much in Scripture which proves that this is so. “The Lord loveth a cheerful giver;” “It is accepted according to that a man hath;” “He that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.” If our offerings be dedicated from Christian motives, and to wise and scriptural objects, we need be under no apprehension lest our Lord should despise the givers or reject their gifts.—T.

Ver. 14.—*A righteous ruler.* David's work as a warrior was preparatory to his work

as a king. He defeated enemies and vanquished conspirators, in order that there might be peace and tranquillity in the land, in order that the pursuits and arts of peace might take the place of violence, disorder, and turbulence. It is still sometimes necessary that the sword should be drawn for the protection of liberty and for the preservation of order. There could not be a worthier, a nobler outcome of David's campaigns and victories than that recorded in the text : " So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people."

I. CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVES THE EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY. This need not reside in a king ; it may be a president, or other chief magistrate. But in some person or persons must be deposited the right and power to rule. Unless men are to live in the condition of savages or brutes, civil authority must be constituted, recognized, and supported. Checks to arbitrary power, limitations to all personal action, there must be ; but not to the destruction of a right to reign and to require obedience.

II. CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVES THE MAINTENANCE OF JUSTICE BETWEEN MAN AND MAN. Power is good when rightly used. Right and might should go together. Rulers are not entrusted with authority for the indulgence of their own caprice, or the enhancement of their own glory. They are bound to act, " not for their own, but for their people's good." In Oriental countries it was and is the custom for princes themselves to sit in the gate and to administer justice. It was so with David and Solomon, and with other kings of Israel. In modern society, where law is more complex, the administration of justice is confided to a profession—to judges and magistrates. In any case, well-ordered society requires both judicial and legislative functions, in whomsoever centred. " The powers that be are ordained of God."

III. CIVIL SOCIETY IS CONSOLIDATED AND PERFECTED BY JUSTICE. " David reigned over all Israel." This was undoubtedly the consequence of the impartial administration of justice among all classes. Civil rulers have often been slow to learn the lesson, that there is no foundation for general content like unswerving justice. Just rulers make contented and united peoples.

IV. CIVIL SOCIETY IS DESTINED TO EXTEND ITS ADVANTAGES TO ALL MANKIND. Every community where kings and rulers reign with justice, every nation which is exalted by righteousness, is a beacon to the world. Peoples so favoured have a sacred mission to fulfil, and upon them is laid a responsibility from which there is no escape.—T.

Vers. 1-12.—*The Christian campaign.* As " David smote the Philistines and subdued them," so we, engaged in a holy warfare, must live to smite and to subdue the enemies of God. Our Christian life cannot be fully represented under any one image, but if it can be said to be one thing more than another, it is a long spiritual campaign. We ask what are—

I. THE ENEMIES WHOM WE HAVE TO SLAY. These are not visible Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, such as presented themselves against David, sword in hand. The adversaries of our souls and of God are : 1. Invisible spiritual forces (Eph. vi. 12). 2. Evil things embodied in the outer world. In (1) ungodly men, who deliberately tempt us to depart from rectitude ; and (2) unfaithful Christian men, whose tone or type of character is lower than our own, and who, unwittingly to themselves and imperceptibly to us, draw us down towards their own spiritual level ; (3) unchristian institutions. 3. Evil forces within our own soul. A man's worst foes are those of the household of his own heart —his own tendencies to pride, to self-will, to indulgence, to worldliness.

II. THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE. David's weapons on his fields of battle were sword and shield, spear and bow, war-chariots and horses. " The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty . . . to the pulling down of strongholds " (2 Cor. x. 4). They are : 1. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. 2. The force of Christian sympathy and zeal. 3. The co-operation of single-minded, earnest men.

III. OUR HOPE OF SUCCESS. David looked to (1) his own generalship ; (2) the support of his " mighty men ; " (3) the valour and discipline of his troops ; but especially and mainly to (4) the presence and power of the living God. We look to (1) the perfect fitness of the truth we preach for the hearts and wants of men ; (2) the presence and power of the Almighty Spirit of our God. He it is who " causeth us to triumph."

IV. THE SPOILS OF VICTORY. These in David's wars were towns (ver. 1), subjects (vers. 2, 6), gifts (vers. 2, 6), chariots and horses (ver. 4), gold and brass (vers. 7, 8), political

alliance (vers. 9, 10). Other spoils than these are the reward of victory in the Christian strife. They are: 1. *Regenerated human souls.* "He that converteth a sinner," etc. (Jas. v. 20). "What is our crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye," etc.? (1 Cor. ii. 19). Those whom we have been the means of enlightening and redeeming are the spoils we "bring home," the crown we wear. 2. *Faculties and forces restored to their rightful use.* David took "very much brass wherewith Solomon made the brazen sea," etc. (ver. 8), for the house of the Lord (ver. 11; 2 Chron. iv. 12, 15, 16). Thus were the possessions of the enemy made to contribute to the service of Jehovah. It is the truest of all triumphs when we succeed in so changing the spirit of men that the time, the thought, the money, the energy which they had given to the service of sin they now devote to the cause of Christ and to the well-being of the world.—C.

Vers. 11-17.—*God's preserving kindness.* The key-note of this chapter is the passage, "Thus the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went" (vers. 6, 13). We may let the other verses of the text take their tone from this.

I. GOD'S PRESERVING KINDNESS TO DAVID. This was manifested in various ways: God preserved him from: 1. Injury in battle. He was neither slain nor wounded by the darts that must have been levelled at him by many a foe. 2. Defeat in war. He was never beaten by any enemy he encountered, and, finally, all his foes submitted to his rule. 3. Serious mistakes in public policy. Solomon, his brilliant son, committed a most serious error in overtaxing his people; and Rehoboam, his grandson, started on his royal career with a fatal blunder (2 Chron. x.). But David had been thus far preserved from taking any step which endangered his own position or enfeebled his kingdom; hence he was delivered from: 4. Disloyalty on the part of his subjects. "Executing judgment and justice among all his people" (ver. 14), placing competent men at the head of the different departments of the state (vers. 15-17), he was secure of the attachment of his people, and "reigned over all Israel" without (at this time) any danger of rivalry or disturbance. 5. Special spiritual perils. David was exposed to the peculiar danger of kings, and very particularly to the peril of complacency and self-glorification. He had risen from the sheepcote to the throne, had enlarged and magnified the Hebrew kingdom, had attained to considerable distinction in the world (so far as it was known to him), and he must, as a fallible man, have been under a strong temptation to glorify himself and take great credit for enterprise and sagacity. From this "the Lord preserved David." The human sovereign laid his victorious position at the feet of the Divine King. He did not apply the spoils of war to the embellishment of his own house, but "dedicated them unto the Lord" (ver. 11). But he did something more and better than this: he ascribed his successful career—witness his psalms of thanksgiving—to the good hand of his God upon him. He gave God the glory. Thus "the Lord preserved him whithersoever he went," even when he went far along that "slippery place"—prominence, power, success in battle.

II. GOD'S PRESERVING KINDNESS TO US. We have to bless God as our Creator, Provider, Father, Redeemer; we have also to magnify him as our continual Preserver. He preserves us. 1. In life; both in the retention of our being (Job x. 12), and in the continuance of our existence on earth. 2. In health; in freedom from disease, in deliverance from mental failure, in the possession of "heart and hope." 3. In favourable circumstance; saving from overwhelming loss and from crushing disappointment, and (often for very long periods together) from saddening bereavement. 4. In spiritual integrity. When other things had gone, David could find unspeakable consolation in the thought, "As for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity" (Ps. xli. 12). And whatever may betide; though God should remove health, treasure, kindred, friends, from the path on which we walk, yet if he is maintaining us in his fear and in the love of our Redeemer, if he is delivering us from the shipwreck of the soul (1 Tim. i. 19), and sustaining us by the upholding power of his Holy Spirit (Ps. li. 12), then may we exclaim, not in the accents of despondency like the broken patriarch (Job vii. 20), but in the joyous and thankful tones of a successful spiritual warrior, "What shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men?"—C.

Vers. 1-5, 12, 13.—*David's wars.* This chapter opens with an account of David's wars, followed by a succession of brilliant victories. Following on the previous

chapter, though separated from it by a considerable length of time, it brings before us much spiritual instruction. The previous chapter contains an account of the many "exceeding great and precious promises" made to David, his confidence in them, and also that which invariably flows out of such grace—his communion with God. Communion with God is the outcome of grace received. But out of realized grace and communion with God flow warfare and victory. This is the opening record of this chapter. The former supplies strength for the latter, and he who goes forth from his knees to fight the good fight of faith will, in every battle, be "more than conqueror" through him that loves him. And mark how David is single-handed among many foes, and all of diverse character. "Edom, Moab, the children of Ammon, the Philistines, Amalek, and the Syrians. What a host, and how diverse! Yet God's eye follows the single-handed servant amid all these foes. A "wall of fire" is round about him—"the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went." So is it with every servant of God who goes forth to fight the Lord's battles direct from communion. "Victory!" is inscribed on his banner. He is invincible, because "strong in the Lord, and in the power of *his* might." He may be single-handed, and his foes may be legion and of every character, but he triumphs over all and, like David here, lays all the trophies of victory at the Saviour's feet.—W.

Vers. 4, 9-11.—David, Hadarezer, and Tou. The Spirit of God is a faithful Biographer. If he records the good features of character in God's children, he is no less faithful in describing the dark side of their character. In this the Word of God is a striking contrast to all human biography. David's cruel conduct in "houghing the chariot-horses" is in keeping with the imperfect light of that dispensation, and is not recorded for our imitation any more than the records of crime in our daily press. It teaches us that there is only One perfect. There is a blot on every escutcheon except that of the Lord Jesus; and they are recorded by the Spirit of God in order that the eye of the soul should be ever turning from the *best* of earth's heroes to him who is the "chief of ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." Let us be warned by the cruelties of David's time and mark his graces, and follow him so far as he followed Christ. Hadarezer's spoils and every other are consecrated to God. Not a trophy falls into David's hands but is laid there. Hadarezer's spoils and Tou's gifts are all alike—the Lord's. May we follow him here, and cast every crown at the feet of Jesus!—W.

Vers. 6, 13.—Divine preservations in work and war. In the record given of David's expeditions and wars, one thing stands out prominently and impressively; it is twice repeated here, as if to it attention was to be particularly drawn: "The Lord preserved David whithersoever he went;" or, in the quaint language of Nehemiah, "The good hand of his God was upon him for good." It may be noted—

I. THAT DAVID WAS IN ALL THINGS GOD'S SERVANT. This relation set him in an especial manner under God's care. As his *creatures*, we come under his providences. As his *children*, we come into the grace of his fatherly tending. And as his *servants*, we are assured of his safe keeping while engaged in his mission. The fuller and nearer are our relations with God, the more complete may be our security and our rest in the Divine hands. Compare the expression, "Man is immortal till his work is done." Our Lord Jesus knew that no harm could come to him while he was about "his Father's business."

II. THAT DAVID'S WHOLE LIFE WAS IN GOD'S KEEPING. Because he never broke free of the idea of *service*. He never wanted to isolate any part of his life, and keep it for self. It is this which alone severs a man from Divine keeping. A man's wilfully taking his life into his own hand involves the withdrawing of special Divine grace, and then the man learns the evil of his own waywardness by the unrelieved troubles into which he falls. This is the permanent lesson for the ages taught by Eve's wilfulness in the garden of Eden. The man who can say, "We serve the Lord Christ," and apply it to his whole time and powers and spheres, may be sure that he is altogether safe in "the secret place of the Most High, abiding under the shadow of the Almighty." The angels have charge concerning him, to keep him in all his ways. They will be near that they shall even bear him up lest he "dash his foot against a stone."

III. THIS IN NO WAY INTERFERED WITH HIS SHOWING ENERGY AND ENTERPRISE. It

might seem that such assurance of Divine preservation would give a sense of security that would lead to indolence and indifference. But it never does do so, because such a temptation is resisted and overcome by the impulse to *faithfulness*. To *look at*, the good man's life should in these respects be the same as the worldly man's. On the surface there should be the energy, enterprise, perseverance, and skill, which are the conditions of success in worldly undertakings. The difference lies below. The good man lives and labours for God, and in his strength. The worldly man has no other end than his own fancied good. It may be fully proved and illustrated, from Bible examples, and from those of the Christian history, that full consecration to the service of God has ever been the impulse to a nobler living than any other motive can inspire men to reach. God's servants always strive to be the *best possible* in every sphere where they are set.

IV. IT BROUGHT DAVID STRENGTH FOR DUTY, AND REST FOR THE HEART, TO BE ASSURED THAT GOD'S SHADOW WAS OVER HIM. Compare such expressions as, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety;" "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" And compare such experiences of *strength* as when fighting the lion and bear, or the giant Goliath; and such experiences of *preservation* as when hunted by King Saul upon the mountains. All new undertakings were entered upon with the quiet heart. God hath kept; he has promised to keep. "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps."

Here meet the ever-recurring difficulty of practically fitting together man's energy and God's inspirations; man's enterprise and God's preservations; man's free-will and God's absolute will. Show that to the man who *fully trusts*, the difficulty fades away; and that, in a most real and practical sense, God's care and preservation and grace are the sanctifying shadow under which noble lives are now lived.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Loyalty to God in the time of success.* It is noted that the best of the spoils of David's wars he loyally "dedicated unto the Lord," thus proving himself as faithful in the time of prosperity and success as he had proved himself in the time of failure and trouble. The *testing* power of adversity is often considered, and is, indeed, one of the familiar topics of public teaching; but the *testing* power of prosperity is not worthily estimated or efficiently treated. Yet God works by *both*, and the second provides the more searching and severe forms of testing. Many a man's root-weakness of character has been discovered by success. It is harder work to *go up* in life, keeping hold of God's hand, than it is to *go down*. And it says much for David, and little for Solomon, that under God's temporal blessings David held fast his integrity, and Solomon virtually forsook the God of his fathers. In the instance now before us, David had a grand present from *Tou*, the King of Hamath. Such a present would seem to be his own exclusive property, and no man could have blamed him if he had added it to his private estate. But, in pious loyalty to God, he looked upon it as a part of the success with which God had attended his labours, so he dedicated it to the honour and service of God, and gained a far richer blessing out of the gift than if he had kept it for himself.

I. SUCCESS IN LIFE MAY SEPARATE US FROM GOD. It may, by filling our life with fresh interests, and crowding out God. It may, by nourishing pride, and destroying the conditions on which alone God can dwell with us. It may, by making the real god of our worship to be self, and so dethroning the living God. It may, by declaring our unfaithfulness as we use the success for self, and not for God, and so bring ourselves under Divine judgments. Or it may, by nourishing *carnal security*, and bringing us into a spiritual condition that must grieve and quench the Holy Spirit.

II. SUCCESS IN LIFE MAY BIND US CLOSELY TO GOD. It will, if we fully recognize the Source whence all success comes. It will, if we are watchful over our spiritual culture, through the means of grace, while the success is growing. It will, if we are fully resolved to consecrate to God's use any success we may gain. It will, if we carefully reportion our gifts, to God's house and service, as our success advances. Compare Jacob's early vow at Bethel (Gen. xxviii. 22), "Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give a tenth to thee." And illustrate David's sacrifices for the tabernacle and temple during his reign, culminating in his splendid gift out of his "own proper good," his own private property, just at the close of his career (ch. xxix. 3-5). We may be

directly helped in maintaining the right spirit, under advancing prosperities, by the devotement of portions of our success to pious uses. Making the gift of portions testify that we hold the whole as God's, and only entrusted to our stewardship in the mystery of the Divine grace. "What have we that we have not received?" Offer what we may to God's service, of it we must say but this, "Of thine own have we given thee." —R. T.

Ver. 14.—*King's justice.* Of all the features of royalty the chronicler selects one, or apparently two, as special characteristics of David's reign. "He executed judgment and justice among all his people." Magistracy, the deciding of disputes, and the punishment of criminals, are always prominent parts of kingly duty. They are *less*, apparently, in our times, because our sovereign does not preside in person in our law-courts, but delegates her duty to her judges. They were *more*, apparently, kingly work in ancient times, and under Eastern conceptions of royalty. When Solomon entered on the responsibilities of kingship, the thing that seemed most serious to him was his duty as a judge. He felt the need of *judicial* insight, seeing that, as a young man, he had no treasured stores of experience. His request of wisdom chiefly referred to this necessary gift of Eastern kingship. Kitto says, "The wisdom which he craved was that of which he had already enough to be able to appreciate the value of its increase—practical wisdom, sagacity, clearness of judgment and intellect in the administration of justice and in the conduct of public affairs." The administration of justice may well be set thus prominently forward, for probably nothing bears so directly upon the well-being of a nation as the wisdom and the purity of its judges. The terms used in this verse are, however, intended to include more than court-justice, and we may see that—

I. KINGLY JUSTICE IS THE EXPRESSION IN THE NATION OF THE PATERNAL RULE. The *family* is the first aggregation of human individuals, and its head and ruler is the *father*. The next aggregation of men is that of the tribe; a number of families uniting their interests, and dwelling together, and at the head of the tribe, as ruler and judge is the patriarch, or tribal father. The larger aggregation of men is the union of tribes in the nation, but the same idea is preserved, and the recognized head and ruler is the *king-father*, or the fatherly king. The associations of these two terms need to be carefully given; and it should be shown how the one tones the other. This distinction being set prominently forward,—The king seeks to do the absolutely *right* without any more than a general knowledge of and interest in his people; a king cannot be expected to know individuals. But exactly this is of the very essence of fatherhood. The father is as loyal to the right as the king, but he seeks to apply the claims of right to the actual condition of individuals, whom he knows with precision, and in whom he feels a direct and personal interest. And so it may be said that the perfect idea of a king is expressed in the term *father*, and that a true father must have all that is essential to a king. It is always said of the good king, "He is the father of his people."

II. KINGLY JUSTICE IS THE REVELATION TO MEN OF THE DIVINE JUSTICE. No one word can suffice to present the relations of God with men. And that because no words contain an absolute and necessary meaning. Their connotation differs for different individuals. Show that neither *king* nor *father* are sufficient alone. We want for God a word which shall bring home to our hearts the conviction that he is dominated by the sense of right; but we as certainly want a word which shall assure us that all his ways with us are toned with personal interest in us, perfect knowledge of us, and the gentlest consideration for our weaknesses and wants. So the justice of God must be to us both kingly and fatherly.

This subject opens up the discussion of the true basis of the "atonement." Only by fully estimating Divine justice as both kingly and fatherly can we discern the "needs be" for a satisfaction of eternal *law*, and a persuasive manifestation of eternal *love*.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIX.

This chapter runs very closely parallel with 2 Sam. x. 1-19; a chapter also of nineteen verses. The slight differences between them avail to make one or the other narrative a little clearer or a little fuller. The time is only marked, as in the first verse of the preceding chapter, by the too general formula, "after this." Between the last verse of the preceding chapter and the first of this, we find interposed, in the Book of Samuel, the account of David's thoughts and deeds of kindness "for Jonathan's sake" to Mephibosheth "of the house of Saul," who was a son of Jonathan, though apparently not personally known at present to David.

The chapter gives an account of David's war with Ammon and Aram allied temporarily, and the ungracious cause of the war—the insult put upon David's messengers, when sent on a mission of kindly and sincere condolence, on occasion of the death of Nahash, King of Ammon. Some think that the contents of this chapter are in reality a narration at greater length and in fuller detail, belonging to the space occupied by vers. 3-13 of last chapter. They would, in like manner, identify 2 Sam. x. 1-19 with viii. 3-13.

Ver. 1.—Nahash. It is possible that this may be the Nahash of 1 Sam. xi. 1, 2 and xii. 12, who, being signally defeated by Saul, may have been the more inclined to show partiality to David. But it would appear that nearly sixty years had elapsed, and if so, it must be held very unlikely, and would point to the conclusion that it was his son whose death is here in question. With this the statement of Josephus ("Ant." vi. 5, § 3), would tally, which says that the Nahash of 1 Sam. xi. was killed in the destruction of the Ammonite army then wrought by Saul. Possibly the word "Nahash" was the official title of kings of the Ammonites (and, though considering its signification, *i.e.* *serpent*, scarcely a flattering one from a modern point of view, yet this is overruled by the association of the attribute of *wisdom* with the serpent in olden time, of which we have more than a trace in Matt. x. 16), as "Pharaoh" of kings of Egypt, etc.

Ver. 2.—Because his father showed kindness to me. The instance of kindness here

alluded to is not recorded. There may have been many opportunities and calls for it during David's persecuted life, and when the Ammonite king would feel a motive beyond any intrinsic goodness of heart to "show kindness" to the youth who was Saul's object of hatred. It is, however, very remarkable that we find a genuine kindness towards David still cleaving to the succession of Ammonite kings, even after the events of this chapter (2 Sam. xvi. 27-29). Hanun. Nothing else is known of this Hanun. Though here the name of an Ammonite king, we find it in Neh. iii. 13, 30, the name of two of those who helped repair the city. The *Assyrian Inscriptions* contain the name as that of a Philistine king, tributary to Tiglath-pileser (see "Speaker's Commentary").

Ver. 3.—Thinkest thou that David, etc.? The Hebrew is, "In thine eyes doth David?" The order of to overthrow, and to spy out is reversed in Samuel.

Ver. 4.—The classical scholar will not fail to be reminded, so far as the shaving here spoken of is concerned, of the account contained in Herodotus, ii. 121. The parallel place makes the resemblance close, in that it tells us that "one-half of their beards" was shaved. To shave them was an affront to their customs, dignity, and religion; to shave them half added mockery; and to cut off half their garments completed the tale of ignominious and contemptuous insult (Isa. xx. 4). The beard was held almost in reverence by Easterns.

Ver. 6.—Made themselves odious. The Hebrew root of very strong force, *וְנַזֵּה*, is here employed, and which our Authorized Version translates, both in the parallel place and elsewhere, far more uncompromisingly than here. A thousand talents. Not stated in Samuel. This talent was of three thousand shekels, believed to be equivalent to £342. Mesopotamia. The parallel place has Aram-beth-rehob, instead of our *Aram-naharaim* ("Syria of the Two Rivers," *i.e.* Tigris and Euphrates; Authorized Version, "Mesopotamia"). From comparing this verse with ver. 16, it may seem probable that those strictly called "of Mesopotamia" lent either no aid at first or but very partial. It is observable that the numbers of men supplied by Beth-rehob, Zobah, and Iahthob in the parallel place (viz. *thirty-two thousand*) agree with the numbers of this verse, from which we may conclude that, whatever Aram-beth-rehob (probably either Rehoboth on the Euphrates, or Rehob last of Lebanon) and Aram-naharaim may strictly

stand for respectively, they here substantially mean the same. It is possible that the difference is that of a corrupt text or careless copying. The Aram-naharaim (*Mesopotamia*), which comes before us first in Gen. xiv. 10, passes out of Scripture language after the defeats of this chapter—the tract of country which it designated (some seven hundred miles by twenty to two hundred and fifty) being absorbed, first by Assyria, and afterwards by Babylon. The *Assyrian Inscriptions* reveal the fact that Mesopotamia was the prey of a large number of small separate tribes at the period of the judges and the early Jewish monarchy, which is quite consistent with the glimpses we here get of it and its people. Aram-maachah probably designates the tract of country north of East Manasseh, bordering on Palestine, and bounded by the Jordan, Mount Hermon, and on its east, Salcah. Zobah (see ch. xviii. 3, note; 1 Sam. xiv. 47). The parallel place adds also "the men of Ishtob."

Ver. 7.—Thirty and two thousand chariots. The reading in the parallel place is evidently what is intended (comp. ch. xviii. 4 with its parallel, 2 Sam. viii. 4). Clearly a stop should follow the numeral, which designates the number of the men under arms. Medeba. Some four miles south-east of Heshbon (Numb. xxi. 30; Josh. xiii. 9, 16; Isa. xv. 2), or others give it as nine miles. It is not given in Samuel.

Ver. 9.—The kings. Compare this and ver. 19 with ver. 19 of the parallel chapter, and also with ver. 8 (2 Sam. x. 19, 8).

Ver. 10.—The meaning in brief of this verse is that, as Joab found there were practically two enemies, and two armies to face, he avoided the mistake of being shut up between them more than necessary, and

divided his own hosts. He took the flower of all, under his own command, to face the Syrians in the field, who were the most formidable of the enemy. The rest he put under his brother Abishai, to face the Ammonites at the gate, i.e. of the city Medeba. The plan succeeded, for if Abishai had only done as much as hold back the Ammonites awhile, so soon as they saw the Syrians break and flee they knew that Joab and his army would be free to "help" Abishai.

Ver. 15.—Then Joab came to Jerusalem. This is equivalent to saying that, for what he deemed sufficient reasons, Joab did not stay to besiege the Ammonites in the city, within the walls of which they had taken refuge, nor to pursue the Syrians. Hence we find these latter soon made bold to rally and to get additional aid.

Ver. 16.—Beyond the river; i.e. the river Euphrates, Shophach. In the parallel place spelt *Shobach*. Of him nothing else is known except his death, as recorded in ver. 18 and in 2 Sam. x. 18.

Ver. 17.—Came upon them. The reading of the parallel passage is probably correct, i.e. they "came to Helam," inasmuch as the place is repeated, both in ver. 16 and ver. 17. Nothing else, however, is known of Helam. The Septuagint has *Adadu*.

Ver. 18.—Seven thousand men which fought in chariots. The parallel passage has "the men of seven hundred chariots." There could not be ten fighting men to a chariot. The reading of Samuel is more likely to be correct than our present reading. Forty thousand footmen. The parallel place shows "horsemen."

Ver. 19.—Became his servants; i.e. his tributaries and vassals.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1-19.—*The ill work of suspiciousness.* Even when the history and the biography which we come across in Scripture are of a repulsive character, we manifestly have no room to blame the historians, who certainly did not make that history nor invent their biographies, but who did faithfully record in both the manifestations of human nature. On the other hand, we have much for which to be thankful in the comparison of Scripture history and biography with other. Human hearts, human life, make history; and according as these are willingly or unwillingly beneath the strong overruling control of Divine providence do they make history that gladdens the heart to read, or that makes ashamed. But for instructiveness much will depend on the selection and the disposition of the material of history. And Scripture follows, we doubt not, a perfect rule and wisest guidance in these respects. The sensational is not its guiding principle; certainly the prurient is not; nor that which would affect or even heartily "strive to wind" it

"... too high
For mortal man beneath the sky."

It courts not extremes for extremes' sake, nor gives prominence to the more unusual

rather than to that which, by reason of its frequency, would be likely to be the more useful. It cannot be told for how much civilized society has to be thankful that it possesses such models as the biography and history of Scripture afford, and mankind that it is offered such wealth of wisest and most needed instruction. The present chapter is notable for a very simple tale of the weaving of unmitigated mischief by the swift play of that little shuttle, the shuttle of suspicion. Kindness and goodness and wisdom—the works of these are for it miserably *unravelled*; and neither does it do *itself* any good, it incurs swift destruction. This portion of history teaches—

I. THE VITALITY OF THE SEED OF KINDNESS. Whoever Nahash was, some time had elapsed since his kindness to David. For that kindness will have belonged to the time of David's need. All this is reversed now. Ingratitude would have all the sooner forgotten it, now that David's circumstances were so altered, had the heart of David been of the bad, ungrateful sort. But this was not so, and the kindness of Nahash had dropped a good seed in the good soil of David's heart. It was not a mere memory. It was not an action eagerly accepted in the pressing hour, but disparaged, depreciated, discounted in selfish thought after that hour had passed. It was not turned into a reason for avoiding the sight of the person to whom debt was due, or for dropping communication with him. Kindnesses rendered often get treatment of this sort—i.e. no return or ill return. But this is not the fault of the kindness. It lies at the door of the bad, ungrateful heart of the person to whom it has been shown. Otherwise seeds of kindness possess great vitality.

II. THE VITALITY OF THE SEED OF KINDNESS AMID CIRCUMSTANCES UNFAVOURABLE TO IT. Strongest affections often grow in most untoward clime and place. They throw their roots down with vigorous determination, in stony, rocky places. The little soil they find in groove, chink, fissure, is often good and rich, however, and they use it well, and ere long make the rift larger, and acquire thereby more moisture and more deposit of soil. And it is so with kindness. The most diverse nature will appreciate it most. Sometimes just because it is unexpectedly offered to the foreigner, the outcast, the despised, the undeserving, the notorious sinner, the man whom a thousand give up as a hardened hopeless man, for one who entertains a contrary thought, it takes amazingly to the soil, and becomes ere long a vast and fruitful growth. And now, what had impressed David much was, that when his father and mother, and king and people, had "forsaken" him (not all of choice by any means), an Ammonite had "taken him up," and shown kindness to him.

III. THE LENGTH OF VITALITY OF THE SEED OF KINDNESS. As has been said, we do not know the exact length in this case. But a considerable number of years had probably passed. And they were years which had been crowded with the kind of events which would drive many and many a thing out of the mind, and alter the proportions and the look of things, and correct many an exaggerated estimate, and naturally help a man to forget how hungry he once was, and how unsheltered, and how friendless, and how downcast in heart.

IV. THE LIABILITY TO DESTRUCTIVE BLIGHT OF THE KINDLIEST FRUITS OF HUMAN NATURE. Here was the kindness of Nahash about to show its remoter and its higher description of good result. It had fulfilled its first office of real, practical, perhaps saving service to David. But now its offspring, its scion of generous kind, was to become apparent to God and to men. It was wishful to make its returns. It was going to show the reproductive nature. No fault of its own, it is baulked, injured, cruelly blighted. It is a testimony that *good things* in this world are not secure of their good influence, that goodness postulates not unfrequently a good sphere. Once Goodness itself "came to its own," but its own "knew it not," refused it, put it to open shame, crucified it!

V. THAT THIS KIND OF BLIGHT IS NOT ALWAYS A MYSTERY. No; in this case, for instance, it is only too explicable. Of the blights of nature, it may be said, that they are free of blame to men, though not free of disaster to them. They are borne on the winds of heaven, and in a sense must be said to come of the will of heaven, much as those winds themselves. No earthly power can stay them, or do more than partially provide against their incursion—partially undo and recover their mischief. But not so is it with the moral and spiritual blights we know and see in our own life, in the larger area of human history. Here it is manifestly due to two conspiring causes. 1. To the

bad advisers of *suspicion*. The princes of the children of Ammon, round Hanun, are wise above what was written, above what was true. They were bad advisers, *not* because they meant ill to their master, *not* because they were false to him, *not* because, like Job's comforters, they were hard and unsympathetic, and their theology as shallow as it was presumptuous; but because they were feeding on suspicion. Their philosophy of human nature was to fault. They had experience, had doubtless much experience of human life and character, but they had *not* had *enough*. Their induction of instances was insufficient, and thinking "themselves to be wise, they became fools." 2. To the weakness of the ruling head. Hanun himself had to make the decision; he was answerable for the verdict; he presumably had more material than his advisers within the compass of his knowledge, and he might have overruled them and their suspicion. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety," but the multitude must be large enough, and varied enough, and representative enough, and it was not so now. How many a ruler, from Rehoboam down to our present age, has ruined himself and his nation, and involved them both in utterest curse of most devastating murderous war, because of his individual lack of sound judgment, of wise and understanding heart, of prayer and piety unfeigned! Suspicion has its use, with every other power of our nature, but now it was misused. Suspicion is ever a faculty to be suspected of the wise man. Suspiciousness is one of the unhappiest of all tendencies of the disposition. It should be jealously used and scrupulously guarded.

VI. THE VAST GROWTH OF STRIFE, INIQUITY, UTTER MISERY, THAT MAY COME OF THE ONE FALSE STEP, OF ONE MAN ILL-ADVISED OF HIS FELLOWS AND UNADVISED OF GOD. Hence now came wars, and those who did the mischief were the first to fly to the thought of war, and to prepare for battle. Their foolishness and iniquity returned upon their own pate. But not there alone. How many thousands of others were involved in the common slaughter!

VII. LAST OF ALL, THE DIVINE UTILIZATION OF HUMAN ERROR, HUMAN SIN. David's enemies, after all, are they who are exterminated or nearly so. And some, who had "halted between two opinions," repented of their indecision. They "made peace with David." They "became his servants." But, in addition to this, they learned not to "help the children of Ammon any more." The victory was won for God. Strength was gained for his chosen people, and confidence wrought afresh in them in their Divine Captain. And withal surrounding nations learnt something of the truth, and with whom peace were best to seek, surest to find.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHOR.

Ver. 2.—*Kindness and sympathy.* Stern warrior though David was, and capable of severe and even cruel actions, he nevertheless had a warm and tender heart. So much might be gathered from the story of his youthful affection for Jonathan, and from that of his subsequent forbearance towards Saul. In maturer years he retained the warm sensibilities of humanity. Thus, when the King of Ammon died, David felt sincerely for his son and successor, and, that he might give expression to his kindly sympathy, "sent messengers to comfort him concerning his father." His compassionate feelings, and his courteous and graceful expression of them, are suggestive of some reflections upon human kindness and sympathy.

I. Consider THE GROUND AND ORIGIN of these feelings. They lie deep in human nature, and are, in fact (as Bishop Butler has so well shown), as much natural social principles, as self-love is a principle of individual action. They are implanted by God, and are akin to his own gracious and benevolent disposition. He is a God of "love and kindness;" "in all our afflictions he is afflicted." Especially is this apparent in redemption. It was compassion that animated the Divine Father in his purpose to save our sinful race. It was love that actuated the incarnation and sacrifice of Immanuel. The dispositions, then, of which we are treating have their deep foundation in the character, the attributes, of our Creator. So far from being signs of human weakness, they are an honour and ornament of humanity.

II. Regard THE OCCASION of the manifestation of these dispositions. Human life is such as to call them forth. No man, no woman, can go through life without abundant

opportunity for the display of these qualities. In times of health and prosperity there is comparatively little occasion for sympathy and tender kindness. But times of trouble, sickness, suffering, adversity, bereavement, must come to all men. Such times are the providentially appointed opportunities for kindly sympathy. Then the friend will "show himself friendly." David's heart was touched by the tidings of his friend's death, and he was drawn to show kindness to the living son for the sake of the deceased father. A sense of gratitude naturally and properly gave acuteness to these feelings. David had in former days received kindness from Nahash, and on this account he all the more felt the claim of the fatherless son upon his friendly sympathy.

III. Observe **THE OUTWARD FORMS** which these feelings assume. These must be determined by circumstances, according to relative age, social position, and character. Sometimes by sympathizing expression of countenance and manner, sometimes by words spoken or written, sometimes by services, sometimes by appropriate and seasonable gifts, we may show our cordial sympathy, and thus rivet the sacred bonds of humanity and of friendship. David on this occasion sent envoys to his friend's son, to condole with him and to assure him of his good feeling and his good wishes. Such action must in the circumstances have proved gratifying and strengthening. Wisdom and tact will discern the most suitable way of acting in the several cases which may arise.

IV. Reflect upon **THE VALUE** of these dispositions. To underestimate, still more to despise kindness, is the sign of an unjust and an ignoble mind. Shall we leave out of sight, in reckoning life's riches, the precious sympathy, the dear kindness, of our kindred and our friends? These dispositions have a value which only the heart can appraise; they are in themselves precious, and no just mind would barter them for diamonds and gold. They have also a practical and substantial worth. When one friend is taken from us for a season, it is no mean advantage to have another friend, upon whose counsel we may lean, and upon whose sympathy and faithfulness we may count. Human kindness is a poor substitute for Divine compassion, but it may well prove one of its fairest flowers, its richest fruits.—T.

Ver. 13.—True valour. The annals of the human race are, alas! filled with the records of war, and the happily unwritten annals of innumerable tribes would have consisted of little else. Israel is no exception. Joab, as one of David's mighty men, shared his chief's warlike prowess without sharing all the higher excellences of his character. Yet on this occasion Joab gave utterance to language the nobility and beauty of which cannot but be acknowledged. The words are an expression and a description of true valour.

I. **THE HEART OF THE VALIANT.** "Be of good courage." Action needs motive. The heart within is the explanation of the outer life. In modern warfare, science, skill, command of material, are far more important than in ancient times, when the individual qualities of the hero were almost everything in the conduct and results of war. But, if a country is to be defended or delivered, the people and their leaders must have a brave, a dauntless heart.

II. **THE CONDUCT OF THE VALIANT.** A brave heart must find its expression in brave deeds. "Let us behave ourselves valiantly!" "Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow." It is so in all departments of life. It is not the dreamer or the sage, but the man of resolution and of energy, who conquers in the strife.

III. **THE MOTIVE OF THE VALIANT.** "For our people, and for the cities of our God." Remark the power of unselfishness to raise the moral quality of actions. It was not with aggressive, ambitious purposes that the Israelites drew the sword—

"But chief were those who not for empire sought,
But with their toils their people's safety bought."

Many wars doubtless have been undertaken in a misguided, mistaken spirit of patriotism. Still, it is a good element so far in any enterprise, that the motive animating it is our country's good.

IV. **THE CONFIDENCE OF THE VALIANT.** "Let the Lord do that which is good in his sight." Here was faith in Providence; a reference of all to the wisdom of the Most High; a resolve to leave the issues in the hands of the God of hosts. Fatalism has

sometimes been regarded as favourable to valour; but far more stimulating to courage is confidence in an all-wise Ruler and Disposer of events. The soldier will go bravely to battle, the labourer to work, the martyr to suffering, when the heart is inspired with the assurance of the Divine presence and favour and support. "They that trust in the Lord shall never be ashamed or confounded, world without end."—T.

Vers. 1—19.—*A bundle of mistakes.* This is a chapter of mistakes. Everything goes wrong; except, indeed, that the wrong is righted inasmuch as the wrong-doers are worsted, and made to pay a heavy penalty for their folly. David may be said to have erred in acting as if it were true—

I. THAT KINDNESS IS APPRECIATED BY THE FROWARD. He meant well; his spirit is much to be commended. Gratitude for past kindnesses is a virtue which can hardly be overpraised; it is too often absent from those in whom we have a right to look for it. But the Hebrew king did not reckon on the churlishness of the Ammonite court. The princes of Ammon were men of a low and froward type, and were incapable of crediting a neighbouring power with simple and genuine good will. Hence an act of ingenuous goodness was entirely thrown away; indeed, it acted as a spark to a magazine; it brought about an explosion of national wrath. It is always well to wish to show kindness to any and every one, but it is not always well to put our wish into practice. There is no need to "cast pearls before swine." Only we must take care that this injunction of our Lord does not hinder us from deeds of courageous kindness. Judgment and generosity must go together in the path of good will.

II. THAT THERE IS NECESSARILY WISDOM IN A NUMBER OF COUNSELLORS. (Ver. 3.) Hanun himself was probably inclined to accept David's overture of condolence, but he allowed himself to be overruled by his "princes." It is wise to take counsel with others, but it is to be remembered that there is often truth in the strong and bitter saying, "Twelve wise men in counsel make one fool." Experience shows that where one man sees his way clearly, a number of men will often confuse one another and come to an unsound conclusion. We are not to allow a number of men to override a strong conviction, especially when that conviction is reached after prayer and consultation of God's Word, and when it is on the side of generosity.

III. THAT SUSPICION IS NEARER THE TRUTH THAN CHARITY. Doubtless these princes who ascribed David's action to a sinister desire "to spy out the land" (ver. 3) considered themselves remarkably astute, and believed that they had hit upon the truth. We know that they were utterly wrong. If they had accepted the ostensible object of the mission as the real one, if they had shown the smallest charity in their spirit and credited David with kindness of heart, they would have been in the right. As it was, their suspicions only led them directly away from the truth. Be charitable, and you will far more often be just than if you are habitually suspicious.

IV. THAT ANYTHING IS GAINED BY INSULT. The shameful insult, amounting to outrage in all international codes, that was perpetrated when "Hanun took David's servants," etc. (ver. 4), wrought no good, and did an immensity of harm to its authors. It led to disastrous defeat in war (ver. 15), and to a strong exasperation of feeling against them on the part of a powerful neighbouring people. Insult never answers. It hardens the heart which indulges it; it rankles in the breast of him against whom it is levelled; and, sooner or later, it brings down retaliation and penalty. Moreover, it provokes Divine condemnation (Matt. v. 22).

V. THAT WE CAN MEASURE THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR TRANSACTIONS WITH OUR FELLOWS. How little did these Ammonites think that this act of bravery and provocation would be followed by the train of bitter consequences which ensued (vers. 6—15; ch. xx. 1—3)! How little did the Syrians, when they hired themselves to the Ammonites (vers. 6, 7), imagine that that mercenary militarism of theirs would end in the double overthrow inflicted on them at the hand of David (vers. 14, 16, 18)! We can never see how far our transactions will extend; there may be the largest and longest issues latent in very humble beginnings. Of nothing is this more true than strife (Prov. xvii. 14; Jas. iii. 5; Matt. v. 25, 26).

VI. THAT PERSISTENCY PREVAILS WHEN WE FIGHT AGAINST GOD. In vain did Syrians draw forth Syrians "beyond the river" (ver. 16) to fight against Israel. The Lord was with David, "preserving him whithersoever he went" (ch. xviii. 13), and to persist in an

endeavour to overcome him was only to "fight against God" (Acts v. 39). When we are seeking to crush truth, righteousness, piety, Christian earnestness and zeal, we are bound to be beaten. However persistent we may be, we shall surely be overcome in the end. It is hard to kick against the goads of God (Acts ix. 5).—C.

Vers. 10-14.—*The conditions of success in the battle of life.* When the time shall come that "devout men carry us to our burial," when good men will be forming an estimate of the life we have lived on the earth, will they be able to say of us that we were victors in the strife, or will they have sorrowfully to acknowledge that we were beaten in the battle of life? That will depend on how we are conducting ourselves now. Three are three conditions of success.

I. FIGHTING ON THE RIGHT SIDE. "Let the Lord do that which is good in his sight," said Joab. Whether we shall win or not depends on whether or not we have God upon our side. If he be for us, who or what can be successful against us? (Rom. viii. 31; Ps. cxviii. 6). And he will be with us if we are on the side of truth, righteousness, freedom, love.

II. HAVING A GOOD HEART FOR THE BATTLE. (Ver. 13.) Joab sought to infuse heart into the soldiers he was leading. "Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly." He appealed to their patriotism ("for our people") and to their piety ("for the cities of our God"). He could not have touched two more responsive chords than these. We must summon one another, and call upon ourselves to be courageous in the strife before us, mindful of the many reasons we have to do valiantly and well. (1) The presence and the promised help of God; (2) the approval of our own conscience, the enjoyment of self-respect; (3) the crown of joy we shall win if we are able to save souls from death, or lead many along the path of life; (4) the urgent want of a sin-stricken world that every brave and true man should do his best. The world sorely needs all the witness we can bear, all the help we can bring.

III. MAKING A WISE DISPOSITION OF OUR FORCES. Joab owed his victory in part to sagacious generalship. He selected the best soldiers of his army to encounter the strongest troops of the enemy, the Syrians (ver. 10), hoping to be able to repel the less formidable Ammonites by the less soldierly of his own forces (ver. 11). Moreover, he took care to have a reserve in case of need, by arranging that whoever should be first victorious, whether his brother or himself, instead of continuing the pursuit of the flying enemy, should come at once to strengthen the hands of the still-struggling division (ver. 12). This was a most wise arrangement. Many a battle has been decided by the presence or absence of a reserve force. At Naseby the battle was lost to the king because the royalist leader pursued too far, and was gained for the Parliament because its leader returned in time from following the retreating enemy to fall on the rear of the wing which was still engaged. In the battle of life, the event may turn on a wise disposition of our forces. We are so to expend our physical powers and our mental resources that we shall direct our strength to the most difficult tasks, leaving the less serious ones to our weakness, and that we shall always have something in reserve for the critical hour. Especially should we see to it that we have friends to fall back upon in the trying ordeal. "Woe unto him that is alone when he falleth!" happy he who, when he is hard pressed, has the voice and grasp of friendship to sustain him! By (1) excellency and admirableness of character, by (2) beauty and attractiveness of spirit, by (3) generosity of heart and hand, let us secure the sympathy and the support of friends in the hour when victory or defeat is trembling in the balances.—C.

Vers. 1-5.—*David and Hanun.* Between Nahash the King of the Ammonites and David, there subsisted a very friendly relation, which had been commenced during the exile of the latter, and was deepened by their mutual hostility to Saul. Nahash had died, and David was anxious to show his son Hanun kindness in remembrance of his deceased father. The princes of Hanun persuaded the young king that another motive actuated David, in fact, that this show of kindness concealed the spy. David's messengers were disgracefully treated; and, never reflecting for a moment the consequences of such conduct, they were sent away with the marks of shame and disgrace. This inconsiderate act on the part of Hanun led to a terrible war and great slaughter, and eventually to the almost utter annihilation of the kingdom of Ammon. What

terrible results follow from the misinterpretation of motives! Yea, wars in families, in the Church, in nations, and among individuals have arisen times without number from the false construction our hearts put upon the motives and conduct of others. We may depend upon it that in all such cases the "charity that thinketh no evil" comes off best in the end not only temporally but spiritually, besides obviating an amount of evil to ourselves and others of which we have not the smallest conception when we act unguardedly, or under the impulse of the moment.—W.

Vers. 6-19.—*Joab and Abishai, and the battle between the Israelites and the allied armies of the Ammonites and Syrians.* One sin always leads to another, and the insult of Hanun's princes led on to a bloody war. No doubt the inconsiderate act of Hanun to David's messengers was regretted shortly after it was committed. But it was too late. It is a law of God's moral government that though the *sin* of our acts may be forgiven, the consequences of them must be reaped. "Whosoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." A little time sufficed to make the princes of Hanun aware that sooner or later there would be a terrible reprisal. David felt the indignity keenly. Yet the retribution did not proceed from him, but from those who had so grossly insulted him. This is invariably the case. A dread of retribution and a guilty conscience go together. The inconsiderate act of a moment, it is foreseen, will lead to consequences which must be averted; and so another is resolved on, and then follows a collapse or utter ruin. Thus it was here. The consequence of a momentary impulse are the destruction and ruin of a kingdom and nation. But notice, when the armies stood face to face with each other, Joab's conduct. The Ammonites and the Syrians beset Israel behind and before. Joab was in straits. He evidently saw his danger. In the emergency he does his best, and then casts himself and his cause upon God. He asks not for victory. He does better. He makes the battle not a matter between the Ammonites and Israel, but between the Ammonites and *God*. He asks not for victory, but simply says, "Let the Lord do that which is good in his sight." This is faith of a high order. Herein he is an example for all believers. In every perplexity, difficulty, danger, or whatever the emergency may be, let us, as Joab did, devise the *very best* plans, use *all means*, and, having done all, leave the result calmly and confidently with God, feeling sure that whatever may be the result "all must be well." Such confidence will always sooner or later meet with its reward. And so it was here. Joab's faith and trust in God was crowned with a great victory.—W.

Ver. 2.—*Religious courtesy.* True religion of necessity involves the culture of the beautiful, the gracious, the considerate, and the sympathetic in human character. Its plea is effectively expressed by St. Paul: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." This verse presents an instance of the courtesy which piety prompts. It is intended to point out that there was more in this matter than court formality; David bore a grateful sense of kindness shown him by Nahash, and found what seemed a most fitting time for acknowledging it. Illustrations may be given of the practical importance of the "polite" in human society; but better than formal politeness is the considerate courtesy of the good man. The counsel to all Christians is, "Be pitiful, be courteous."

I. THE GOOD MAN IS SENSITIVE TO KINDNESS THAT MAY BE SHOWN HIM. As David cherished the memory of the kindness of Nahash. Some people take things done for them as their *rights*, and haughtily treat them as even below their rights. Those who are made sensible of the mercy of God to them in redemption, are always made sensitive to human kindnesses, which seem to them shadows of the Divine.

II. THE GOOD MAN IS QUICK TO OBSERVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHOWING KINDNESS. Knowing how good it is to receive, he is ever ready to give. The sympathizing word is not restrained. The kindly and helpful deed is not postponed. The good man cherishes kind thoughts, but he will not rest without giving expression to them. The weak man tries to satisfy himself with cherishing *good feelings*. The large-hearted man is ever keenly observant, and nobly anxious, to find out the best forms and times for pressing good feeling into kindly word and deed. Our Master said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Loyalty to truth is fully consistent with Christian courtesy, and with the most tender considerateness for the feelings of others.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*The evil of the suspicious mind.* Shown by the counsellors of Hanun. Observe the difficulty men find when they attempt to estimate motives; and the sad tendency of depraved human nature to light upon, and to prefer, the evil motive as the explanation of conduct. These points may be readily illustrated by instances within the experience of every preacher. It may be shown that—

I. THINGS MAY LOOK WELL WITHOUT BEING WELL, and that therefore—

II. THERE IS ALWAYS NEED OF DUE CAUTION LEST WE SHOULD BE DECEIVED. But it should be carefully shown and impressed—

III. THAT THE SUSPICIOUS HABIT OF MIND EASILY FANCIES THERE IS EVIL IN WHAT WAS MEANT WELL.

Then it may be shown that the suspicious habit is only a reflection of a man's own conscious untrustworthiness or badness. We suspect in others what we know there would have been in the act if we ourselves had done it. These mean and low-natured counsellors of Hanun measured David by the measure of their own meanness. They would have taken such an opportunity to spy out a neighbour's land; so they felt sure that David had a deceptive and hostile intention. When we do not go this length, we sometimes assume evil by establishing some general principle, by which we force an explanation to everything, without being prepared to allow exceptions in individual cases. The mischief of the suspicious temper in society and in the Church may be fully illustrated; especially its influence in starting jealousy and creating enmity, and separating "very friends." From the incident connected with the verse show how it may even lead to terrible miseries for many. Press that the suspicious temper grows on a man, dwarfing and crushing out the *trustfulness* which, toned by wisdom, is man's true dignity and blessedness, and the basis of good social relations.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*Skill and trust ensuring victory.* In one or two forms this subject has already been dealt with; so, under this heading, we propose to give here only a brief outline, as the filling up of it must of necessity involve some repetition of thought. A new outline may suggest some freshness of form. The principle expressed in the familiar words, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you," finds illustration in every age, and in every sphere of our life. Give the illustrative incident connected with this verse. Joab skilfully *planned*, as a good general; but he called for a full trust in God, and committal of the matter to him, as became the good man.

I. MAN MUST PLAN AND WORK AS IF EVERYTHING DEPENDED ON HIS SKILL. This is the *life*-loyalty.

II. MAN MUST PRAY AND WAIT AS IF EVERYTHING DEPENDED ON HIS TRUST. This is the *heart*-loyalty.

III. GOD GIVES A BLESSING WHICH CROWNS BOTH THE WORKING AND THE WAITING. This is the Divine recognition of the *whole* man: the acceptance of the offering of a man's whole self, including both the *active* and the *passive* sides of his nature.

APPLY. Our fellow-man can see only *our working*, and so our success may seem to be the natural fruitage of our own work. But we *know*, and God *sees*, that our successes are the Divine benedictions that rest upon the *life*-toil and the *heart*-trust, when these are fully and lovingly blended together.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XX.

The contents of this chapter are all to be found in the work of Samuel, but woven in, in very different places. The cause of the first considerable difference of this kind is in connection with the occurrence of what would have seemed a mere casual detail of expression in our first verse, "But David

tarried at Jerusalem," at which same statement, however, the writer of Samuel halts, to append all that then happened with David in the disastrous matter of Bathsheba and Uriah, occupying nearly two whole chapters (2 Sam. xi. 2—xii. 25)—a history not recorded at all by the Chronicle compiler. Why David tarried at Jerusalem, and how far he did so legitimately and in

harmony with the necessities of government, we know not, but certain it is, he was tempted to make the unhappiest use of his "tarrying at Jerusalem."

Ver. 1.—The fifteenth verse of the previous chapter stated that the discomfited Ammonites "fled . . . and entered into the city," i.e. into Rabbah. Hither we now learn that, by the command of David (2 Sam. xi. 1), Joab, at the "return of the year," i.e. probably at the return of spring (Exod. xxi. 16; xxxiv. 22), brings the power of the army, and, after ravaging the country surrounding it, sits down to besiege Rabbah itself. The series of feasts, beginning in spring and ending in autumn, regulated the year. The sacred year began with the new moon that became full next after the spring equinox; but the civil year at the seventh new moon. This one verse illustrates in four several instances at fewest the advantage of having two versions of the same events, even though in this case in comparatively immaterial respects. 1. We here read that Joab wasted the country of the children of Ammon . . . and besieged Rabbah, in place of the less consistent reading of 2 Sam. xi. 1, "destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah." 2. We have here in the Hebrew the right word for "kings" (מֶלֶךְ), instead of the word for "angels" (מֶלֶךְ), as in the parallel place. 3. While we read here that Joab smote Rabbah, and destroyed it, the parallel place, now shifted to 2 Sam. xii. 27-29, tells of Joab's generosity (if it were this, and not fear or possibly somewhat tardy obedience to strict commands given on his commission), in his message to David, to repair to the spot immediately and share the glory of the reduction of the city, or be its nominal captor. 4. And, once more, while we read here that Joab smote Rabbah, and destroyed it, and yet read in the parallel place of the delay and the visit of David (with which the very first clause of our ver. 2, "And David took," etc., is in perfect accord) and of David's nominal taking of the city, we find probably the just and inartificial explanation of all this in 2 Sam. xii. 26-29. There we read more particularly that Joab sent word he had taken the "city of waters," i.e. the lower part of the city (where a stream had its source, and no doubt supplied the city with water), which was very likely the key of the whole position, and called upon David to come up and "encamp against the city and take it," i.e. the city, or citadel, which stood upon the heights north of the stream. Glimpses of this kind may suffice to convince us how rapidly a text, really correct, would melt away for us a very large proportion of the whole number of the lesser obstacles which

often impede our path in the historical books of the Old Testament. At the time that kings go out. It was no doubt the case that, even in Palestine, the winter was often a period of enforced inactivity. Rabbah. The punishment of Ammon for the treatment of David's well-intended embassy of condolence is now about to be completed. The familiar root of Rabbah signifies multitudinous number, and, resulting thence, the greatness of importance. It was the chief city of the Ammonites, if not their only city of importance enough for mention. In five passages its connection with Ammon is coupled with its name (Deut. iii. 11; 2 Sam. xi. 26; xvii. 27; Jer. xlix. 2; Ezek. xxi. 20), "Rabbah of the children of Ammon." It has been conjectured to be the *Ham* of the Zuzim, or the *Ashteroth Karnaim* of the Rephaim (Gen. xiv. 5), of which latter theory there is some interesting evidence of a corroborating tendency at all events (see Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' ii. 985). Rabbah is the proper spelling of the word, except when in a constructive state, as in the above phrase. The relations of Moab and Ammon with Israel are full of interest. After the overthrow of Og, King of Bashan (Numb. xxi. 33), "Moab and Ammon still remained independent allies south and east of the Israelite settlements. Both fell before David—Moab, evidently the weaker, first; Ammon not without a long resistance, which made the siege and fall of its capital, Rabbah-ammon, the crowning act of David's conquests. The ruins which now adorn the 'royal city' are of a later Roman date; but the commanding position of the citadel remains; and the unusual sight of a living stream abounding in fish (2 Sam. xii. 27; Isa. xvi. 2) marks the significance of Joab's song of victory, 'I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters'" (Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' 323, edit. 1866).

Ver. 2.—Found it to weigh a talent of gold. Two difficulties present themselves in this verse, viz. the reported weight of this crown, and the uncertainty as to what head it was from which David took it. Whatever was its weight, if David's head was able to sustain it for a minute or two, the head of the King of the Ammonites might also occasionally have borne it. Yet it would scarcely be likely that the King of the Ammonites would have so ponderous a crown (calculated at a weight of a hundred and fourteen pounds Troy, or a little more or less than one hundredweight) as one of ordinary wear, or that he would have one of extraordinary wear on his head precisely at such a juncture. Both of these difficulties will remove if we suppose that the Hebrew מלך, instead of meaning their king, is the name

of the Ammonitish and Moabitish idol (*i.e.* Moloch), and which we find (Authorized Version) in Zeph. i. 5, and probably (though not Authorized Version) in Jer. xlix. 1, 3, and Amos i. 15. The Septuagint treats the word thus. The point, however, cannot be considered settled.

Ver. 3.—Cut them with *saws* (so Heb. xi. 37). We have here the very doubtful (so far as regards its real signification) Hebrew word **נָשַׁבֵּן** (and he cut) instead of **נָשַׁבֵּן** (he put). Probably it is nowhere else used in the sense of “cutting,” if it is here. Its ordinary sense is to rule or put into subjection. The parallel place (2 Sam. xii. 31) corrects, in the word (Authorized Version) *axes*, our Hebrew text, which repeats the word for *saw*, though putting it in the plural, and which thereby shows **נָשַׁבֵּן**, instead of **נָשַׁבֵּן**. This last word means “axes” or “scythes,” and is from the root **נָשַׁבֵּן**, to cut (2 Kings vi. 4). It is found only in 2 Sam. xii. 31, though it should appear here also. There is a fourth severity of punishment mentioned in the parallel place, that the people were “made to pass through the brick-kilns,” a form of torture possibly suggested by the own familiar cruelty of the Ammonites in “making their children to pass through the fire to Moloch.” However, in harmony with what is above said respecting the doubtfulness of the just signification of the verb **נָשַׁבֵּן**, much uncertainty hangs over the interpretation of this verse. Instead of severity and needless cruelty on the part of David, it may rather set forth that he *subjected* them to hard tasks in connection with the cultivation of the soil and with the making of bricks. The *saws* and *harrows* and *axes* (or *scythes*) were awkward and unlikely weapons to be employed for the purpose of inflicting torture, when the ordinary weapons of battle and warfare were close at hand. This view, however, is contrary to the verdict, so far as the above Hebrew verb is concerned, of Gesenius’s ‘Thesaurus,’ p. 1326, and of Thenius, on this and the parallel passage. When such punishments were of the nature of torture, the cruelty was in some cases extreme. “The criminal was sometimes *sawn* asunder lengthwise; this was more especially the practice in Persia. Isaiah, according to the Talmudists, was *put to death* in this wise by King Manasseh, ‘Sanhedrin,’ p. 103, c. 2; comp. Justin’s dialogue with ‘Trypho’ (Jahn’s ‘Sacred Antiquities,’ p. 132, § 260, vii.). *With saws*. The word in the original is not in the plural. It occurs again only in the parallel place (2 Sam. xii. 31) and in 1 Kings vii. 9, both times in the singular. The teeth of Eastern *saws* then and now

usually incline to the handle instead of from it. *With harrows of iron*. The only *harrow* known to have been used at this time consisted of a thick block of wood borne down by a weight, or on which a man sat, drawn over the ploughed land by oxen (Isa. xxviii. 24, 25; Job xxxix. 10; Hosea x. 11), and the root of the Hebrew word expresses the idea of crushing or levelling the land. But our present word is very different, and is found only here and in the parallel place, with the word “iron” accompanying it, so as to be equivalent to a compound word, and appears to mean “sharp instruments of iron,” or sharp threshing instruments. The use of the former part of this phrase (1 Sam. xvii. 18) for *cheeses* is the only other instance of its occurrence. *Saws* should be “axes,” or “scythes,” as stated above, though it is not any of the three more ordinary words for “axe” (see Smith’s ‘Bible Dictionary,’ i. 142).

Ver. 4.—For the *Gezer* (**גֵּזֶר**) of this verse, the parallel place (2 Sam. xxi. 18) shows *Gob* (**גּוֹב**), a name not known, but which careless transcription may have easily made out of the former. The Syriac Version, however, as well as the Septuagint, has *Gath* in that verse as well as in the two verses following (2 Sam. xxi. 18—20), another name also easily interchangeable in Hebrew characters with *Gezer*. The “yet again” of our ver. 6 would well accord with the supposition that the conflict with the Philistines was at Gath, or at the *same* place, each of the three times. *Gezer* belonged to Ephraim, and was situated to the north of Philistia (ch. vii. 28; xiv. 16). *Sibbechai* (see also ch. xi. 29; xxvii. 11). *Sippai*. In the parallel place spelt *Saph*. It is remarkable that, in the Peshito Syriac, over Ps. cxlii. is found the inscription, “Of David, when he slew Asaph, the brother of Gulyad, and thanksgiving that he had conquered.” Of the children of the giant. The Hebrew word for “giant,” *rapha* (always in these verses spelt with a final *aleph*, but in the parallel verses always with *he final*), is here (Authorized Version) translated. “The *Rapha*,” a native of Gath, was the forefather of the Canaanitish *Rephaim*, mentioned as early as Gen. xiv. 5; xv. 20; Deut. ii. 11; iii. 11; Josh. xii. 4; xv. 8; xvii. 15. The slaying of Ishbibi-benob (2 Sam. xxi. 16) is not here given. It is also to be observed that the lengthy account of Samuel, respecting Absalom and his rebellion (2 Sam. xiii.—xxi.) is not found here.

Ver. 5.—*Elhanan the son of Jair*. In Samuel Jair appears as *Jaare*. This Elhanan is probably different from him of ch. xi. 26. There is a strange confusion in the reading of this and its parallel verse. If our present

verse is to stand corrected by accepting from its parallel "the Bethlehemite" in place of our *Lamhi*, then either we have no name given for the brother of Goliath, the Gittite; or, if we drop the word "brother" (changing the *vir* of Chronicles into the *rex* of Samuel), and make Goliath the Gittite the man slain by Elhanan, then of *such* a Goliath we know nothing, and it is a most unlikely coincidence of name with the conquered of David's sling. Kennicott's seventy-eighth dissertation is occupied, and ably, with the *pros* and *cons* of this question; and the curiosities of Jerome on the passage may be found in his *Quæstiones Hebraicae*. There seems no sufficient reason to depart from our reading here, to which it were preferable to adjust the reading in the parallel place, which exhibits almost certainly a glaring corruption of text in another respect.

Ver. 6.—A man of . . . stature. The Hebrew text is *מִתְנָשֵׁה*, as also in ch. xi. 23; and (*in the plural*) in Numb. xiii. 32. An eccentric and probably corrupt form appears in the parallel place. Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, ii. 43) speaks of the *Sedigitæ*, and places them in the family of Forli, among the Himarites.

Ver. 7.—Jonathan (see 1 Sam. xiii. 3, 32; ch. xxvii. 32 (comp. also ch. ii. 13),

where it is probable that "nephew" should be read for "uncle"). It is to be noticed that the name of this child of the giant, of twelve fingers and twelve toes, is *not* mentioned. We are not *compelled*, therefore, to regard it as remarkable that he of the fifth verse should not be named.

Ver. 8.—These were born unto the giant in Gath. The parallel place reads, "These *four*," etc. The first of the four in view there is not mentioned here. The account is given in 2 Sam. xxi. 15-17. And as it was in *that* encounter that David himself played the chief part (though, apparently, it was Abishai who dealt Ishbî-benob the fatal blow in "succouring" David), the notice of it would have seemed necessary to complete fully the sense of the following clauses, "They fell by the hand of *David*, and by the hand of his servants." Still this, it may justly be argued, may have been the very reason of the form of expression here chosen, coupling David's work and that of his servants. This brief summary in the last verse of this chapter, as also in the last verse of the corresponding chapter, just serves to reveal to us the *nexus* that bound together the three or four exploits for narration. It consisted in the common descent of the four giant victims.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*On the wars of the Israelites, and on war generally.* "At the time that kings," etc. This chapter also seems to contain little of homiletic interest. Nevertheless it offers abundantly the opportunity of some consideration of the subject of the wars undertaken by the separated people, and thence of the subject of war since and generally. This chapter repeats the word "war" three times in vers. 4-6. But yet rather the very turn of the expression in ver. 1, "At the time that kings go out to battle," far surpasses any suggestiveness that might arise merely from the repetition of a word. At the outset of any consideration of this subject as it arises in connection with Scripture, attention is arrested, and it may be said universally arrested, by certain patent facts. They are facts from which we cannot run away, and which, however they may suffer explanation in themselves, will soon show that they refuse to be explained away. The more necessary is it to treat them accordingly, and to face them steadily. The facts alluded to are such as these: 1. That a very large part of the whole bulk of Old Testament history is concerned with the recital of matters of war. 2. That war manifestly played a large part in the education and formation of character of the people Israel. 3. That it was by no means entirely or even principally owing to any lust of strife or even of conquest which might have possessed the people that they warred so much, but this was assigned to them as a very part of their duty and part of their mission. 4. That with a directness that cannot be mistaken, war is not only prescribed, and that again and again, by God to his people, but he represents himself as Leader of armies, Captain of hosts, and as "going forth" with men to battle, the impersonation of a mighty warrior. The sovereign right of death, as of life, belongs, no doubt, to God—his to destroy, as his to create. But the observable thing in war, so far as those of the Old Testament Scriptures are concerned, lies in the fact which would seem infinitely more enormous and astounding than, through our familiarity with it, it now does—that God destroys human beings by the agency of other human beings. The sweeping

away of vast populations by plague and famine, by fire, and by what we call the accident of sea or land, would not present a tithe of the difficulty that lies before our feet when the one element is produced of the sword and weapon of warfare wielded consciously, deliberately, determinedly, by men on the battle-field for the destruction of fellow-men. Yet we must renounce the credibility of the Old Testament Scriptures, or must acknowledge that the destruction of human life was abundantly effected by war, undertaken and carried through to the bitter end by Divine sanction and ordinance. Nothing can be more natural than to ask how this is, and, the facts being indisputable, what account can be given of them. It seems likely enough that we may not be able to feel that we have found under any circumstances a complete solution of the problem before us. It may rest upon deeper reason than we can fathom, be part of a larger justice than we can mete, belong to a wider circle or range of analogy than all we have yet caught sight of. But there can be no question that it is as usual open to us to *approach* in the direction of the desired result, though we may stop short of the goal. And—

I. **OF THE DIVINELY COMMANDED WARS AND BATTLES OF ISRAEL.** Here the subject of war is relieved at once of one of its greatest difficulties. For in this case we need not stop to debate respecting the *abstract* possibility of justification of war. Its justification in these cases is for us of the kind called *positive*. And of war thus conditioned we must remark: 1. That its *motive* does not come into the question, and cannot be challenged. 2. That its object must be held to have been for the *universal* benefit. 3. That the fact of its being a method of chastisement and of destruction of human life by the agency of *human beings* must be held to be the one difficult question at issue. Can there be found compensating and justifying considerations, and these not of such a nature as absolutely to refuse to be reconciled with our moral sense? The following considerations may, at all events, be helpful to those who would not impugn, not even for a moment impugn, the right of God to take human lives, in whatever number, unquestioned, by *some* method. With others, as matter of course, they could have little weight. For the destruction of human life in battle, on the part of a people constituted and set apart like Israel, at the command of God was (1) equivalent to a consenting adoption by them of the sovereignty of God. Now, the unity, the absolute *solemnity*, and the sovereignty were the three greatest and most fundamental attributes of Deity, which it was the special *business* of the Israelites to learn. These their education was to master well. (2) It was a vital protection for them against both a superstitious and a supine trust of the invisible, superior power. Had the invisible God always swept their enemies, for instance, from before them without their own instrumentality and co-operation, it is not difficult to calculate something of what sort of expectance and what sort of trust would have been engendered in them. But now, though the battle is of the Lord, and the strength is of him, and the victory his, with most strenuous efforts must the people do the work, gird themselves for the fight, and suffer much while they win. (3) Next to those who suffered the infliction of the Divine purpose and justice, it was to those who executed them the most impressive possible manifestation of all that death and slaughter have it in them to brand upon human minds and fasten in human convictions and light up to human imagination. The terrible assertion of the final power to control, to punish, to avenge, was often needed, is often needed, to "sum up the whole matter," and to be the unchallengeable "conclusion of the whole matter." (4) It was the beginning and germ of that constitution of human society which now peremptorily devolves for a while upon men the entire actual visible conduct of the affairs of men. The Ruler, the King, "the Lord of those men," is gone away awhile into a far distant country, and "the Word of the Lord is precious," and "there is no vision nor dream." The day of reckoning and account is assuredly to come, and all are forewarned of it; but as assuredly it is not yet. And this one fact constitutes the most awful view of human responsibility, whether in war or in peace.

II. **OF WAR IN GENERAL, AND NOT THOSE CASES OF IT ALONE WHICH WERE OF DIVINE COMMAND.** 1. War, horror and scourge that it is, yet snatches its occasion in one of the most necessary and ultimate forms of association of human kind, viz. the nation. Men are associated together in nations by necessity. They are brought together by geographical position. They are held together by community of race. The necessity is a natural one, the consequences are full of significance, the advantages

are of a high, beneficent, and far-reaching kind. But the final risk involved in war produces a phenomenon, and more than merely a phenomenon, in some aspects among the most terrible, nay, incomparably the most terrible, to be witnessed beneath the sun. There are ever ascending and broadening forms of strife, as of philanthropy among mankind. The strife so familiar, as it shows itself between individuals, is passed, by that of families, and of cliques, and of many and various an association of multitudes of almost every description. The strife that so often appears between such units as these is passed again, by that between Churches, and this finally by that between nations, and nations which even league together in order to prosecute their strife more successfully and on larger scale. Now, for all these forms and occasions of strife there is some sort of judge, arbiter, or external authority to end it, except for that between nations. Hence the principle of *resistance* shows itself in its own unqualified hideousness, in its own repulsive malignity of essence. It culminates in war, which is another word for the slaughter in systematic form of numbers of human beings by others animated by no personal ill will, and to whom they are personally unknown. 2. War cannot profess to anything more, anything deeper, than a trial of force against force. The stronger force has to be accepted *pro tem.*, even though the time be prolonged. Nor is it in this respect out of analogy with the decisions of courts of justice in the internal life and administration of a nation. These decisions are respected by those *against* whom they are given by the judge, not because they are believed to be right, yet less because they are felt to be right, nor even because in all cases they *are* right, but because they are supported by the overwhelming power of the strong arm of the law, with all which that phrase means. The order of society is pitted against the passion, the misapprehension, or sometimes even the right of the individual in his solitary plaint. 3. Though war can pretend to nothing but the determination of who is the stronger, yet *right* is presumably one of the combatants. That right sharing the constant present fate of right is often enough overpowered, defeated, the loser. Yet it has had the opportunity of asserting itself. It has asserted itself. It has insisted in a very practical manner on making its voice heard. It has insisted on its presence and its force counting for *something*. And then again, though stricken and bleeding afresh from many a new-made wound, it is sent back to take its patient though oppressed station yet awhile and to bide its time. 4. The real measure of the condemnableness of war depends on its *motives*, on the real causes, hidden or proclaimed, which occasion it. But then it is to be observed that the greater and more decisive the condemnation that may be shown on the one hand, the more the defensibleness conceded to the other side, which resists even unto blood. The proportion that greed, vanity, passion, mere pique, or absolute lust of conquest bear in the production of war will be the real measure—whoever is in the position to assign it—of the guilt of the guilty and of the defence of the innocent. 5. A just estimate of the real nature of war demands that the physical untold misery of it be kept separate in our minds from the moral aspects and results of it. War has offered to view some of the highest possibilities of human nature in its self-devotion, in its *sentiment* disentangled of individual hostility or animosity, in its obedience of the individual to the principle of the community's necessity or weal. 6. The long-looked-for time, the long-prayed-for era, when war shall cease, is the goal to be reached only by the purified and heightened moral sense and goodness of the individuals of *all* nations. This is equivalent to saying, the goal can only be reached by Christianity, in its spread universal, in its diffusion impartial, in its penetratingness individual, in its efficaciousness sovereign. No policy, no wisdom, no external authority seems imaginable that should subdue it, and put it under the feet of men, a destroyed thing. Only the victory of all victories can be looked forward to to lead captive this captivity, and accomplish its end. The clear and sure destruction of this at the same time most barbarous and keenest destroyer of men will be among the last, the grandest, the crowning achievements of Christ, Prince of peace, the promise of "peace on earth," the expression of "good will to men."

Ver. 1.—*One cunning bosom sin.* "But David tarried at Jerusalem." There is not so much as the suggestion of any evidence from which we could justify the inference that David, in thus "tarrying at Jerusalem," was actuated by any wrong design, or was laying himself open to the charge of neglect of duty, indifference to his high responsi-

bilities or inactivity. It is more probable that duty to his people in the central seat of authority found him more in his place at Jerusalem than in the field of battle. That which reads confessedly as a rather peremptory style of summons on the part of Joab, in the fuller account of 2 Sam. xii. 28, cannot be relied upon as any sufficient indication to the disadvantage of David in such a direction. It is more naturally explainable in other ways. Joab's message at the crisis which affairs had somewhat suddenly reached may have been either an act of obedience to strict orders of imperial sort, or in yet nobler obedience to the instincts of strict loyalty. The "tarrying at Jerusalem," however, boded anything but good (2 Sam. xi. 1, 2). The words of simplicity in which the mere historical fact is announced, provoke inevitably the memory of other words, where it is written on page yet more sacred, of the "greater Son" of David on a certain occasion, "And the child Jesus tarried behind at Jerusalem." But beyond the irresistible suggestion of the words, thought declines to go. There is no room for comparison. The case is one the opposite of analogy. And even *contrast* should seem too gratuitous, and to threaten dishonour to the latter occasion, breathing upon it with an unholy breath, and not with the breath of the Spirit most holy. To this interval, anyway, belonged the greatest blots on all the life of David, the sorest stains on his scutcheon, and wounds that went direct and deep to the soul. And we are taught here something in general of the uncertainty, the untractableness of human nature; but may rather take the instruction of the passage in this more particular form—the strength and blinded headstrong way that "one cunning bosom sin" has with it.

I. THE INTERVAL OF REST IS SET AT NOUGHT BY IT. Granted that David did not stay behind at Jerusalem in order to escape all work and elude the activity of duty; granted that business of government, the government of his city and his nation, occupied him; yet the very change of occupation, and the fact that it was at home, was a rest. It was very different from camp life and military superintendence. The hand that holds the pen knows how great the change is, after it has been rather holding the sword and wielding the sword for months, ay, for years past. The greatest warrior, the most successful general, the bravest soldier must surely awhile feel the repose sacred and delicious which permits him to sheathe the sword, forsake the field, and do the works of peace rather than of war. Yet this privilege as soon as enjoyed is abused; this interval as soon as given becomes the mournful and miserable occasion of indelible disgrace and shame.

II. THE SANCTITIES OF HOME ARE SET AT NOUGHT BY IT. Nothing will ever divest home of its sacred claims. They dwell in it, they haunt its retreats, they pervade its air. Not truer that "the heart knoweth his own bitterness," than that home knoweth its own ineffable sweetness. The nursery of purest affections, the school of sound instruction, the point of departure for young ambition, the beacon of good principle to the ends of the earth, the incentive to honourable effort and noble exploit, and anon as age grows, the realm and very throne of most benign authority,—it is this home which the cunning bosom sin of passion discredits, dishonours, disgraces. David knew what the blessing of home was. He often shows it by the way he speaks directly and indirectly of home and of "father and mother." But he knew the blessing yet more certainly by evidence of the too reliable aphorism that we then first best know our blessing when it is taken from us. And for years the blessing had been a lost one to David. How he hungered and thirsted and craved for it! And now he has it, fearfully to desecrate it, because he is led captive, blinded by what he saw, headstrong by what he felt—reason and goodness and conscience all dragged in chains behind the triumph of passion!

III. THE INSPIRATION OF THE ASSOCIATIONS OF JERUSALEM IS SMOTHERED BY IT. It is the metropolis of the country, but sacred beyond the sacredness of any other metropolis, and to David beyond what it was to any other king. How he thought of Jerusalem! How he spoke and sang of it, with the joy that was growing brighter and brighter to perfect day, and long before those strains which others sang to minor key, plaintive wail, and exquisitely saddened memories! How much he had lately joyed in it! What honour had been his to bring to it the ark! What glorious heart-stirring festival of the whole kingdom had centred within its walls thereupon! Place has ever had its quantum of influence. The hardest heart and most callous insensibility will be touched by it. The tender heart and sensitive nature will be responsive to it as to but

a lower grade of inspiration. And now, almost for the first time, David has the opportunity of surrendering himself to the religion of the place, of giving undivided thanks and grateful praise in the place, and enjoying in it some earnest of the Jerusalem above. But no; lust smears the sight of his eye, which sees no longer even the Jerusalem that is below, its fame and glory and pride.

IV. THE IMPERIAL CLAIMS OF DUTY, CONSCIENCE, OF RELIGION AND HUMANITY, ARE SET AT NOUGHT BY IT. To the hot fire of passion these are but as straws. They resist *nothing* at all. They do serve to bystanders to increase the show of the disastrous, destructive fire. The pride of imperial position and the throne stoop for the time without a struggle, and come down from their exaltation to do homage to creature-lust. So much, then, human nature has to say of itself, and so little! So much we are taught do we ever need watchfulness and prayer! The high plateau of honour, glorious opportunity, religion, restfulness, and home enjoyment may be the accursed ground of our own worst dereliction of duty, devotion, and even decency. Unsafe when we are left to self, we are not more safe when we are left by ourselves. "Let him alone" is the darkest doom that even Divine judgment and justice can decree. But when left alone (and that our wish and petition) only for an hour, we shall not be safe, however secure, unless we can take back the words as Jesus on so signal an occasion did, and say, "And yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 3.—*The barbarity of man to man.* There are signal inconsistencies in the character of David. He was capable of kindness, self-denial, and generosity, but he was capable also of cruelty amounting to inhumanity and savagery. Perhaps no act more disgraceful and inexcusable is related to have been performed by him than that recorded in the text. The people of Rabbah had long resisted his arms; and when the city fell David seems to have given the reins to his passions, and to have treated the captive population with what seems to us all but incredible cruelty. But allowance must be made for the manners and morals of the age. Humanity towards enemies is comparatively a modern virtue. Though history records a few striking exceptions to the general rule, that rule was undoubtedly one of utter insensibility to the miseries of a vanquished foe. The chronicler here relates, evidently as a matter calling for no surprise or indignation, that David in cold blood cut the people with saws, broke their limbs with threshing-instruments, and flung them, whilst still alive, into the red-hot brick-kilns!

I. CRUELTY IS AN OUTCOME AND A FORM OF SIN. From the time, and in consequence of, man's original departure from God, human society has been cursed with all the horrors which result from the violation of Divine law, the defiance of Divine authority. Hatred, envy, and strife have run riot, and their manifestations have been the main factors in what is called human history. Hence the barbarities heartlessly and ruthlessly practised among all rude nations. Modern war is nothing but a disgraceful survival of the savage barbarism of the sinful and inhuman past. Even now the practices common in war are enough to sadden and to sicken every sensitive mind. "Whence come wars and fightings? Come they not hence of your lusts?"

II. RESTRAINTS AND CHECKS UPON CRUELTY HAVE BEEN COMPARATIVELY FEEBLE AND INEFFECTIVE. David was a very religious man, but his religion did not preserve him from adultery and murder; nor did it restrain him from cold-blooded cruelty. The ancient civilizations, the ancient religions, failed to check the prevalent insensibility to suffering, the prevalent habit of revenge. Even the religion of the Old Testament had very partial power to secure these ends. Mitigations of the horrors of war have doubtless been introduced by Christianity and by chivalry. Yet the professed servants of the meek and holy Jesus have too often sanctioned and applauded the barbarities of war, the infamies of slavery, the tortures of the Inquisition.

III. VITAL AND SCRIPTURAL CHRISTIANITY ALONE CAN COPE WITH AND VANQUISH THIS EVIL. Rules and maxims are of little avail to contend with the fierce passions of our fallen nature. The new heart, with its changed dispositions, is alone sufficient. The example and the spirit of our Divine Saviour are incompatible with cruelty. In pro-

portion as Christ himself lives in the hearts and governs the lives of men, will inhumanity diminish until it disappear, and until such deeds as those described in the text become impossible. The prophecies and promises of God's Word point forward to a day when the "new commandment" shall be everywhere observed, and when cruelty shall be no more.—T.

Vers. 1-3.—*Further consequences of folly, etc.* We learn these five lessons—

I. THE LONG TRAIN OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF FOLLY. It is long before the whole penalty of a great mistake is paid. Hanun and his foolish princes (ch. xix. 3) doubtless felt crestfallen enough when they were miserably defeated in battle, but they probably comforted themselves with the consideration that they had borne their punishment, and would have no more bitter fruits to swallow. If so, they were mistaken. In the next chapter we meet with more consequences of their folly. The next spring, they had to encounter another army in the field (ver. 1). Often, when we think we have escaped from the wretched results of our thoughtlessness or our sin, we find that we have not: there they are again, walking at our side, or meeting us sword in hand. Let us earnestly pray and vigilantly watch, that we may not be surprised into folly, may not fall into the power of temptation, so that our life may not be darkened by the appearance and reappearance of the penalties of wrong-doing.

II. THE EVIL OF ABSOLUTISM. No doubt this little kingdom of Ammon was autocratic. It is true, indeed, that the princes advised, but the king decided. And what terrible penalties his poor people paid for his decision! The city of Rabbah was sacked (ver. 2), and its inhabitants not only lost their property but were subjected to cruel tortures; and "even so dealt David with all the cities," etc. (ver. 3). Our heart is touched with sorrow and indignation as we think how one man's (or how a few men's) incensate folly brought down upon thousands of the innocent such a wretched fate. Let us thank God that public policy is largely taken out of the hands of one man who may be shamelessly selfish or utterly incapable, and is deposited with the many who consult the large and general interests of the nation.

III. THE PERILS OF POWER. One may well believe that Hanun had little happiness, if any at all, in the subsequent years of his reign. Surely, the cries that came from these mutilated subjects and from these bereaved homes must have rung in his ears, and made discord of every other sound that greeted him. Men covet power, but it is a perilous thing to possess. One great mistake, and we involve numbers of our fellow-men in suffering and sorrow. 1. How should they who wield it be solicitous and prayerful that they may be preserved from abusing it! 2. How well may those who are denied it be content to take the lower place, and be secure from such solemn and weighty responsibilities as they would otherwise incur!

IV. THE NEED FOR REFLECTION IN THE HOUR OF ANGER. It would be altogether unjust to judge David by the humane and merciful standards of our own age; yet we cannot but regret that he inflicted such cruelties on the children of Ammon (ver. 3). We should have liked it (and him) better if he had entertained and acted upon the thought which, on another occasion, he admitted to his mind, "These sheep, what have they done?" (2 Sam. xxiv. 17). He had been greatly provoked, but he carried his indignation further than he was obliged to do, and beyond the point at which a large-minded, God-taught man should surely have stopped. In anger we should pause and think, for we are in great danger of speaking too harshly and striking too hard (Rom. xii. 19).

V. THE BEST CROWN TO WIN AND WEAR. (Ver. 2.) David seems to have set much store on this crown, which was taken from the King of Ammon and placed on his head (Ps. xxi. 3). Better far the crown of God's favour, the crown of righteousness, the crown of grateful love, the crown of glory. These are (1) untarnished with severities; (2) adornments of our true selves (our souls); (3) unfading with time.—O.

Vers. 4-8.—*Little things and great.* How small and insignificant in our esteem are the physical peculiarities of these "children of the giant"! How little we care to treasure their names and deeds in our memories! They probably thought much of themselves, and were made much of by their contemporaries; but they have sunk into entire insignificance now. We feel that—

I. DISTINCTION BASED ON BODILY PECULIARITY IS OF LITTLE WORTH. Great stature makes its possessor conspicuous among his fellows, if that be a desirable thing; great muscular strength serves in good stead on those rare occasions when a man has to resist by physical force. Unusual beauty of countenance attracts the eye and wins the admiration of the opposite sex. But these visible specialities *have their drawbacks, if not their evils.* The first of these often secures a most undesirable and even painful notoriety; the second tempts to acts of violence which are regrettable; the last exposes to peculiar perils of its own. And *how speedily they perish!* In this war with the Philistines these giants “*were subdued*” (ver. 4). Lahmi’s great spear did not save him from the skill of Elhanan (ver. 5); nor the immense stature of the giant with twenty-four fingers and toes, from the courage and capacity of Jonathan (vers. 6, 7). “They fell by the hand . . . of David’s servants” (ver. 8). Mere size of body, mere power of muscle, mere skill of fence, and even beauty of face and charm of manner,—all these are either overmatched with something that is stronger, or they soon fade and fall under the irresistible ravages of time. And when they pass, *how soon they are forgotten!* We hardly recognize some of these names; or, if we remember them, we associate them with other men who bore them, but were distinguished by other and nobler features. The next generation will care little for those who have nothing better to claim than great strength, or commanding stature, or some other bodily peculiarity. On the other hand, we feel that—

II. DISTINCTION BASED ON SPIRITUAL WORTH IS A DESIRABLE EXCELLENCE. 1. *Mental strength*, when gained by diligent self-culture and devoted to useful ends, enjoys a more lasting honour and effects a far greater good. 2. But *spiritual worth* is the most valuable acquisition; that is the true greatness of man. (1) It raises him highest in the scale of being. (2) It renders nobler and truer service. (3) It yields a finer fragrance in grateful recollection (Prov. x. 7). (4) It lives on to distant generations in benignant influence. The “good men do” is not “interred with their bones;” it lives and blossoms, and bears precious fruit in the hearts and lives of men.—O.

Vers. 1-8.—*The wasting of the Ammonites, and David’s wars with the giants.* The outrage inflicted on the Hebrew ambassadors was still further to be avenged by David. Joab was sent out with the power of the army to waste the country of the Ammonites. The former campaign had been disastrous because of the hired auxiliaries of the Ammonites. Now the full strength of David’s army was to be led forth to complete the ruin both of the people and their land. “At the time that kings go out to battle,” i.e. spring-time, the expedition *set out*. Having besieged the capital, Rabbah, and having after a protracted siege taken the lower town, or “city of waters,” and knowing that the royal city would soon fall, Joab invited King David to come in person and have the honour of taking it himself (see 2 Sam. xii. 26). We are thus enabled to reconcile the two statements, that “David tarried at Jerusalem” (ver. 1), and “David and all the people returned to Jerusalem” (ver. 3). David took the king’s crown, and it was set on David’s head. This crown weighed a talent, or one hundred and fourteen pounds’ weight of gold. The crowns of Eastern kings were not usually worn on the head (and could not have been in this case), but were suspended by chains of gold over the throne. We again notice the cruelties of war and especially of that time (ver. 3). These are recorded, not for example, but to deepen our sense of gratitude for the blessings which Christianity has brought in introducing a humane mode of warfare. It may also make us long for the time when “nations shall learn war no more,” and when “righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.” We see here David’s victories over the giants. The “stripling” in God’s hand has overthrown kingdoms and slain the giants of wickedness. In God’s hand “the worm Jacob shall thresh the mountains.” As we review David’s rise from the “stripling” of the wilderness to the highest place in the land, we may say, “What hath God wrought!” “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” To the outward eye of sense a man may be a “stripling,” and in his own eyes “a dead dog” and “a flea;” but it is such instruments God ever uses to accomplish his mighty works and to advance his kingdom in the world. Gideon’s “lamps and pitchers,” Naaman’s “little maid,” the widow’s “pot of oil,” Jonah’s “worm” and “gourd,” and Samson’s “jawbone of an ass,”—these God uses for in these he can be glorified. Man’s

might and power is passed by, for there is no room in them for God to be glorified. If we are only *low* enough, only *little* enough, only *nothing* before him, he can and will use us; and the reason he has so often to pass by the "vessel" is, that it is *too full* and not "fit for the Master's use." "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not [too contemptible to be named], to bring to nought things that are: *that no flesh should glory in his presence*" (1 Cor. i. 27-29).—W.

Ver. 3.—*The horrors of war.* All actions, both of nations and of individuals, should be judged in the light of the prevailing standards and sentiments of the age in which they are done. This is a most important principle, but it is a difficult one to apply wisely; and it is one that may be easily misrepresented. Right can never be other than right, and wrong can never be other than wrong. But *custom* and *sentiment* give a temporary character to many actions which tend to confuse our apprehension of their essential rightness or wrongness. Limited knowledge also leads to the permission of things which advancing civilization shows to be unworthy and even wrong. These points may be illustrated from slavery, truthfulness, sense of the value of life, ideas of property, and war. Another important consideration, which greatly helps to explain Old Testament narratives, is that national judgments must of necessity take national character. An old divine well says, "God can punish *individuals* both in this life and in the next; but he can only punish *nations* in this." There are distinctly personal and individual sins, and there are as distinctly national sins; wrong done by the rulers in the name of the people; or a wrong spirit pervading the people; or times when vice is permitted to run an unrestrained and ruinous course. And such national sin Jehovah ever regards, using such agencies as famine, plague, or war, for its due punishment. In this light the Old Testament ever regards war; the aggressive force is always treated as the executioner who carries out the Divine judgments. And it may be urged that this is still the deeper view to take of war, and that it is quite consistent with a clear recognition of the fact that such an aggressive force may act in mere wilfulness, or in furtherance of wicked schemes of self-aggrandizement. God makes the very "wrath of man" praise him. In treating the incidents of this chapter, it may be well to point out the distinction between what usually happens under the excitements of a siege, and the deliberate judgment that may be pronounced upon a conquered people. As may be painfully illustrated from the conduct of the British soldiers in India and in Spain, when a city is taken by storm, a scene of wild and awful rioting usually follows. Illustrate also from the Roman siege of Jerusalem. For *Rabbah*, the city here referred to, see the Expository portion of this Commentary, and 2 Sam. xi. 1.

I. **ANCIENT HORRORS OF WAR.** Illustrate from different kinds of war—*wars of races*, the young and strong pushing out the old and weak; hardy mountain races occupying the cultured plains of the over-civilized and effeminate; *dynastic wars*, occasioned by the rivalries of different royal houses; *sacred wars*, such as the Crusades, to recover possession of the Lord's tomb; and *wars of revenge*, undertaken to clear off supposed or real insults. Of this latter kind was the war with Ammon (see ch. xix.). Modern ideas concerning war make it impossible for us to approve of the treatment to which the conquered Ammonites were subjected. Some writers have urged that David merely condemned the captives to severe bodily labours, to hewing and sawing wood, to burning of bricks, and to working in iron-mines; but probably the more terrible translation of the language must be accepted, in view of the common war-law of that stern age. And, with its best mitigations, war must still be regarded as a dreadful thing. The whole world sighs for the day when "the nations shall learn war no more."

II. **CHRISTIAN MITIGATIONS OF THE HORRORS OF WAR.** Illustrate from modern treatment of the dead, the wounded, the prisoner, and the conquered. Show how a prolonged period of comparative peace has influenced national sentiment concerning war. Explain, illustrate, and impress that the Christian law of the universal human brotherhood seeks to destroy all forms of war; and the day of its full triumph is surely coming.—R. T.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Strong in body, and strong in God.* Here are introduced to us "a man of

great stature," and of abnormal development; a striking instance of mere bodily power; and a man who could overcome this giant, by virtue of his loyalty to God and reliance on his strength. It seems to be a fact that hugeness of body is usually associated with dulness of mind. The quick-witted David is always more than a match for the ponderous Goliath. It seems to be the fact—at least under our present human conditions—that the culture of the mind tends to ensure the frailty of the body. It seems to be now very difficult, if it may not be called impossible, to gain and to keep the *mens sana in corpore sano*. Yet we should feel that both the *body* and the *soul* are sacred trusts, and that we are responsible to God for the full and wise and harmonious culture of them both. The "body is to be for the Lord," and we are to "prosper even as our souls prosper." There are two principles by which our life should be toned. We should seek to be—

I. STRONG IN BODY; that is, in the bodily powers and resources. Applications may be made to *health, vigour of frame, due control of passions*, and proper training of *mental faculties*. But it should be shown that there are limitations to the success which we may reach in these matters—limitations from constitutional peculiarities, from hereditary tendencies, and from disabilities of circumstance. In this each of us can but reach his *best possible*.

II. STRONG IN GOD; that is, in the higher moral capacities and forces. In the culture of these there need be no qualifications or limitations. Due training of these will ensure complete dominion over the bodily powers and relations, so that all the lower faculties take their due place of ministry or service. And this is the high ideal after which we all should strive—the true man, who is like the *Man Christ Jesus, strong in God*, and therefore strong in body.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXI.

This very important chapter in David's history is the parallel of 2 Sam. xxiv. 1—25, which contains some details not found here, e.g. the route taken by those who went to number Israel (2 Sam. xxiv. 5—8), and omits others. This chapter furnishes one of the clearer proofs (in respect of what it supplies, *not* found in Samuel) that its indebtedness is not to that book, but to a work open as well to the compiler of Chronicles as to the writer of Samuel. Its contents fall into five sections. 1. David's command to number the people, with Joab's remonstrances (vers. 1—6). 2. The means taken to rouse David to a sense of his sin, and his confession thereof (vers. 7, 8). 3. The choice between punishments presented to him and his prayer under the drawn sword of the angel for the sparing of the people (vers. 9—17). 4. The accepted propitiatory sacrifices and offerings of David, and the consequent stay of the plague (vers. 18—27). 5. David's grateful establishment of that same spot as the place of sacrifice (vers. 28—30).

Ver. 1.—Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. This re-

markable sentence takes the place of the statements in the parallel, "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." Our own passage seems to confine the temptation and sin to David. David also seems to be spoken of as the object of malignant attack on the part of Satan, though Israel is spoken of as the object of malignant envy and animosity. It is also to be noticed that in ver. 17 David takes all the blame to himself, and speaks of the people as "innocent sheep." A people and whole nation have, indeed, often suffered the smart of one ruler's sin. Yet here the light thrown upon the whole event by the account in the Book of Samuel must be accepted as revealing the fact that there had been previously something amiss on the part of the people—perhaps something of illest significance lurking in their constitution. This alone could "kindle the anger of the Lord against Israel." It is the opposite of this which kindles the anger of Satan—when he witnesses excellence, surpassing excellence, as when he witnesses "the weakest saint," yet in that strongest position, "on his knees." The apparent inconsistency in Satan being spoken of as resisting Israel, and the anger of the Lord being spoken of as kindled against Israel, is but apparent and superficial. In the first place, these histories do only purport to state the facts

overt. And in this sense either alternative statement gives the *prima facie* facts. Either is true, and both may be true in different chronological order. And further, that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel is no disproof that Satan will see and seize his opportunity. It looks the contrary way. There was a time and an occasion in Eden when Satan thought he saw an opportunity, tried it, and found it, when the anger of the Lord was not kindled against Adam and Eve for certain. But much more prompt will be the *executive* of Satan at another and less doubtful time. The paths in written history are often awhile rugged and broken up; the written history of Scripture is no exception. And in thus being the more in analogy with history *itself*, those unevennesses and breaks are the better attestation of both the reality of the Scripture history and the veracity of its writers. The word (*מִזְבֵּחַ*) occurs twenty-four times in the Old Testament. On all occasions of its occurrence in the Book of Job and in the prophecies of Zechariah, it shows the prefixed definite article; in all other places it is, with the present passage, unaccompanied by the article. Its translation here might appear strictly as that of a proper name. But this cannot be said of the other instances of its use, when without the article (Numb. xxii. 22, 32; 1 Sam. xxix. 4). This constitutes with some the ground of the very opposite opinion and opposite translation. If we regard the name as utterly expressing the personality of Satan, the passage is very noteworthy, and will be most safely regarded as the language of the compiler, and not as copied from the original source. The signification of the word "Satan," as is well known, is "adversary," or "accuser." The sin of David in giving the order of this verse was of a technical and ceremonial character, in the first place, whatever his motives were, and however intensified by other causes of a moral and more individual complexion. We learn (Exod. xxx. 12-16) the special enactments respecting what was to be observed when "the sum of the children of Israel after their number" was to be taken. However, the same passage does not say, it fails to say, when such a numbering would be legitimate or when not. It is left us, therefore, to deduce this from observation. And we notice, in the first place, that, on the occasion of its undoubted rightness, it is the work of the distinct commandment of God (Numb. i. 1-3; xxvi. 1-4). Next, we notice the religious contribution, "the ransom," that was required with it (Exod. xxx. 12-16; xxvii. 25, 26; Numb. xxxi. 48-54). Again, we notice that the numberings

narrated both in the beginning of the Book of Numbers (i.) and toward the close (xxvi.) had specific moral objects as assigned by God—among them the forcible teaching of the loss entailed by the successive rebellions of the people (Numb. xxvi. 64, 65; Deut. ii. 14, 15). And though last, not least, all these indications are lighted up by the express and emphatic announcements in God's original promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that their seed should become *past* numbering, multitudinous as the stars, and as the sands of the seashore. From all which we may conclude that only that numbering was held legitimate which was for God's service in some form, and as against human pride and boastfulness—by God's command as against a human king's fancy—and which was attended by the payment of that solemn "ransom" money, the *bekah*, or half-shekel (Exod. xxx. 12). Other numbering had snares about it, and it was no doubt because it had such *intrinsically* that it was divinely discountenanced, and in this case severely punished. It seems gratuitous with some to tax David with having other motives than those of some sort of vanity now at work, sinister designs of preparing, unaided and unpermitted, some fresh military exploits, or stealing a march on the nation itself in the matter of some new system of taxation. The context offers no corroboration of either of these notions, while several lesser indications point to the simplest explanation (ch. xxvi. 23).

Ver. 2.—*And to the rulers of the people. So Numb. i. 4, "And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of the house of his fathers" (see also ch. xxvii. 22-24; 2 Sam. xxiv. 4, 5).*

Ver. 3.—*But my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants?* The place of this perfectly intelligible sentence, indicating that Joab discerned the object of David in desiring the numbering of the people, is occupied in the Book of Samuel by the words, "And that the eyes of my lord the king may see it;" which some for no very evident reason prefer. It was, no doubt, a very radical element of David's sin in this matter that he was thinking of the nation too much as *his* own servants, instead of as the servants of his one Master. The Lord ever knoweth who are his, and numbereth not only them and their names, but their every sigh, tear, prayer. A cause of trespass. This clause may be explained as though *trespass* was equivalent to the consequences, i.e. the punishment of trespass. This, however, rather tends to explain away than to explain a phrase. More probably the deeper meaning is that, in the fact of the numbering, nation and king would become one in act, and would become in-

volved together in indisputable sin. Though there were no unfeigned assent and consent in the great body of the nation to the numbering, yet they would become participants in the wrong-doing. It would further seem evident, from Joab addressing these words to the king, that it was a thing familiarly known and thoroughly understood that the course David was now bent on following was one virtually, if not actually, prohibited, and not one merely *likely* to be displeasing to God on account of any individual disposition in David to be boastful or self-confident. Otherwise it would be scarcely within the province of Joab either to express or suppose this of his royal master.

Ver. 4.—Wherefore Joab departed, and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. This short verse stands in the place of all the five verses of 2 Sam. xxiv. 4—8, with their interesting contents, giving the route which Joab and his assistants took, and the time occupied (nine months and twenty days) to their return.

Ver. 5.—The report of the numbers as given in this verse does *not* tally with that of the parallel place. Here they are three hundred thousand more for Israel, and thirty thousand fewer for Judah, than there. No really satisfactory explanation of these discrepancies has yet appeared. The somewhat ingenious suggestion that the Chronicle-compiler counted in the standing army (two hundred and eighty-eight thousand, ch. xxvii. 1—15) for Israel, and omitted from Judah a supposed "thirty thousand," under the head of "the thirty" of our ch. xi.; while the writer of the Book of Samuel did exactly the converse,—can scarcely pass muster, although it must be noticed that it would meet in the main the exigencies of the case. A likelier suggestion might be found in a comparison of the statements of our ver. 6 compared with ch. xxvii. 22—24. Indeed, the last sentence of this last-quoted verse (ch. xxvii. 24) may possibly contain the explanation of all (comp. Numb. i. 47—50; ii. 33). That Joab utterly refused to number Levi, because this was a thing most distinctly prohibited (and further because it was not material to David's presumable objects), was quite to be expected. And though Joab is said in the following verse not to have numbered Benjamin, it is possible enough that he may have known this number (ch. vii. 6—11). Yet see what follows.

Ver. 6.—Averse to his task as Joab was, he may have been indebted to the memory of the exemption of Levi from census for the idea of enlarging upon it and omitting Benjamin as well. The important contents of this short verse are not found in Samuel,

so that we can borrow no light thence. But Benjamin was "the least of the tribes" (Judg. xxi. 1—23), and Poole has suggested that God would not permit the numbers of either of these tribes to be lessened, as he foresaw that they would be faithful to the throne of David on the division of the kingdom. Others think that the omission of these tribes in the census may have been due to Joab's recall to Jerusalem before the completion of the work, and to the king's repentance in the interim cutting off the necessity of completing it. This little agrees, however, with the resolute tone and assigned reason contained in this verse. Poole's explanation, meantime, explains nothing in respect of the statement that the king's word was abominable to Joab.

Ver. 7.—Smote Israel. These two words serve simply to summarize in the first instance what the compiler is about to rehearse at greater length. The parallel place shows, "And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people." Some better power occasioned *that* smiting. Reflection brought to David's heart and conscience (1 Sam. xxiv. 5), as often to those of others, restored vitality. The exact circumstances or providences, however, which roused into action the conscience of David are not stated. The second clause of our verse cannot refer to any preliminary smiting, but to the oncoming visitation of pestilence. It is noticeable, if only as a coincidence, that the eleventh verse of the parallel passage (2 Sam. xxiv. 11) opens with a similarly ambiguously placed clause, "For when David was up in the morning, the word of the Lord came to the Prophet Gad," although this is explainable simply as our insufficient Authorized Version rendering. However, failing any external cause, the beginning of ver. 10 in this same parallel place may intimate the adequate account of all in the spontaneous stirring of David's conscience—"the bitter thoughts of conscience born." In these two verses we suddenly come upon the name "God" instead of "the Lord," i.e. Jehovah.

Ver. 9.—Gad, David's seer. The parallel place says, "The Prophet Gad (גָּדֵלְךָ), David's seer" (2 Sam. xxiv. 11). The Hebrew word here used in both passages for "seer," is נָבָן, in place of the word of higher import, נָבָע, the use of which is confined to Samuel, Hanani, and to the person spoken of in Isa. xxx. 10. In this last passage our Authorized Version translates "prophet," while in ch. xxix. 29 our Authorized Version translates both Hebrew names in the very same verse by the one English word "seer." Gad was, perhaps, a pupil of David (2 Sam. xxii. 8), and was the successor of Samuel (ch. ix. 22) in this office.

Ver. 12.—Three years' famine. The parallel place has, in our Hebrew text, "seven" instead of "three." But the Septuagint indicates this to be but a corruption of a later text; for it reads "three," as here. The parallel place shows no mention of the destroying angel here spoken of. The three inflictions of famine, sword, pestilence, are found not unfrequently elsewhere in Scripture (see Deut. xxviii. 21-25; Ezek. xiv. 21; Rev. vi. 4-8). Now . . . advise thyself. The simple text is "Now see," in place of "Now know and see" of the parallel passage.

Ver. 13.—It is in such answers as these—answers of equal piety and practical wisdom, that the difference is often visible between the man radically bad, and the man good at heart and the child of grace, even when fallen into the deepest depth of sin.

Ver. 14.—So the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel. This sentence is followed in the parallel place by "from the morning even to the time appointed." It has been suggested that "the time appointed" may mean the time of the evening sacrifice, and that God shortened thus the three days to a short one day. There seems nothing sufficient to support the suggestion, unless it might lie in the "repenting" of the Lord, and his "staying" of the angel's hand, in ver. 15. There fell of Israel seventy thousand men. The whole number of Israel, including women, must have reached near to five millions. On this assumption, the sacrifice of life for Israel would be something like 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent., or fourteen in the thousand.

Ver. 15.—And God sent an angel. It is at this point *first* that any mention of an angel is found in the parallel place, but then not in the present form, but in a sentence which would seem to presuppose the knowledge of the agency of an angel on the occasion: "And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil" (2 Sam. xxiv. 16). Stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan. The verb "stood" is employed here quite generically. It does not imply that the angel stood on the ground; for see next verse, in which it is said that he "stood between the earth and the heaven," the Hebrew verb being exactly the same. *Ornan* is the uniform form and spelling of the name in Chronicles. In Samuel, however, the name appears as *וְרָנָן* (2 Sam. xxiv. 20), or *Araunah*. Yet in ver. 16, of the same chapter the Kethiv inverts the order of the *resh* and *vau*, prefixing the article, or what looks like it, and again in ver. 18 the Kethiv shows the form *וְרָנָן*. Ornan, then, or Araunah, was a descendant of the old Jebusite race to whom the fort of Zion once belonged. And the present narrative finds him living on

the Hill of Moriah (Conder's 'Bible Handbook,' 2nd edit., 236 [6]). *The threshing-floor.* The primitive threshing-floors of the Israelites still essentially obtain. They were level spots of stamped and well-trodden earth, about fifty feet in diameter, and selected in positions most exposed to the wind, in order to take the advantage of its help in the separating of the grain from the chaff. On these circular spots of hard earth the sheaves of grain, of whatever kind, were distributed in all sorts of disorder. Oxen and other cattle trod them. And sometimes these beasts were driven round and round five abreast. The stalk of the grain was, of course, much bruised and crushed, and the method is described still as of a very rough and wasteful kind. Instruments were also employed, as the "flail" (Ruth ii. 17; Isa. xxviii. 27, 28); the "sledge," to which possibly reference is made in Judg. viii. 7, 16, under the name *barkanim* (Authorized Version, "briers"). These sledges were of two kinds: (1) the *morag* (2 Sam. xxiv. 22; ch. xxi. 23; Isa. xli. 15), made of flat planks joined together, and furnished with rough studs on the under surface; and (2) *agalah*, rendered Authorized Version, "cart-wheel" (Isa. xxviii. 27), made of wooden rollers, or rollers of iron or stone, and dragged by cattle over the sheaves. Egypt and Syria, as well as Palestine, still show these instruments (see Robinson's 'Bibl. Res.', i. 550; and Thomson's 'Land and the Book,' pp. 538-541).

Vers. 16, 17.—These verses offer instances, especially the former, of the shorter narratives not being with Chronicles, but with Samuel. And the longer narrative being with Chronicles is found uniformly in the cases in which reference is had, whether more or less directly, to the ecclesiastical or permanent institution of the Israelites.

Ver. 18.—The angel. The Hebrew shows no article (see Numb. xxii. 34, 35; 1 Kings xiii. 18; xix. 5; Zech. i. 9). The place where the altar was now about to be erected was that made famous by the sacrifice of Abraham (Gen. xxii. 2, 9), and, though less certainly, that known to the priesthood of Melchizedek (Gen. xiv. 17-20).

Ver. 20.—This verse is not found in the parallel place. The Septuagint reading of "king" in this verse, in place of "angel," is no doubt an error. The drift of this and the following verse is plain and continuous. Ornan and his sons had hidden themselves on the apparition of the angel, but came out on the advent of David, to welcome him.

Ver. 22.—The place of this threshing-floor; i.e. the place on which the threshing-floor was made. It was the level summit of the middle elevated ground of the eastern ridge on which Jerusalem was situate (ch. xi. 4-7).

Ver. 23.—Ornan's offer to David of the threshing-floor and all its belongings, as a gift, reminds of Ephron's offer to Abraham (Gen. xxiii. 11). Ornan's prompt offer of gift was, perhaps, all the prompter from the desire to render every assistance to the staying of the plague. For burnt offerings . . . for the meat offering. The whole code of regulations for offerings—sin offering, trespass offering, peace offering, burnt offering, meat and drink offering—is to be found in Lev. i.—vii. As regards the *burnt offering*, see Lev. i.; vi. 8—13. It was called *שְׁלֵמָה*, from its "ascending" accepted to heaven, or else from its being put up or raised up (Hiph. conjugation) on the altar; and sometimes *שְׁלֵמָה*, from being "wholly" consumed. The sin and trespass offerings were for special sins, but this was of a more comprehensive kind and of much greater dignity, as standing for the "purging of the conscience." The entire consuming of the sacrifice signified the unqualified self-surrender of him who brought the sacrifice. It was a voluntary offering, the offerer laid his hand on the head of the victim, and the blood of the victim was sprinkled round about the altar. *The meat offering* (*שְׁלֵמָה*) is fully described in Lev. ii.; vi. 14—23. It was an offering without blood, and therefore was an accompaniment of an offering of blood. It was composed of flour or cakes, prepared with salt, oil, and frankincense—the salt emblematic of non-decay; the oil, of spiritual grace; and the frankincense, of acceptable fragrance. A portion of this offering was to be burnt, and a portion eaten by the priests in the court, unless it was for a priest himself, when all must be burnt. Meantime a drink offering of wine was, in fact, a part of the meat offering itself (Exod. xxix. 40, 41; Lev. xxiii. 13; Numb. xv. 4—7, 9, 10). The material of the meat offering might be the green or fresh-gathered ears of corn. The Septuagint translates *δῶπον*; Luther, *speis-opfer*; and it need scarcely be said that our Authorized Version *meat offering* exhibits only the generic employment of the word "meat" for food.

Ver. 25.—Six hundred shekels of gold by weight. The only way to reconcile this state-

ment with that of the parallel place, which (2 Sam. xxiv. 24) speaks of "fifty shekels of silver" (i.e. taking the shekel at 2s. 8d., equal to about £6 13s. 4d.) as the price of "*the threshing-floor and the oxen*," is to suppose that the fifty shekels speak of the purchase money of the oxen indeed, but not of the floor itself, which was valuable, not only for size and situation, but also for its prepared construction; or again, keeping to the literal language of Samuel, that "*the floor and the oxen*" are intended, while our expression, "the place," may designate the whole hill. The value of gold as compared with silver was as sixteen to one. If this be the solution, we should have again an instance of the compiler of this book seizing for perpetuation the point of greatest and most permanent interest, i.e. the purchase of the *whole* place.

Ver. 26.—He answered him from heaven by fire. There is no doubt significance in the fact that the compiler of Chronicles records this answer by fire, unmentioned in the Book of Samuel. He would give prominence to this great token, as determining, or going a great way towards determining, the site of the temple. The answer by fire was given on critical and special occasions (Lev. ix. 24; 1 Kings xviii. 24, 38).

Ver. 28.—David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshing-floor. David "saw" this by the fire on the altar, and by the fact that God, at the voice of the angel (ver. 18), had not misdirected him, but had guided him aright. He sacrificed there. This means to say that he *thenceforward* "sacrificed there;" and *established* there the service of sacrifices. David was so impressed "at that time," by the answer given in fire from heaven, that he began systematically to sacrifice on the site of this threshing-floor, instead of going to the high place at Gibeon, where the altar of burnt offering still stood. To have attempted to go thither would not only have meant a long and wasteful delay, but would also have meant the neglecting of the august omen of the angel present. An awful sanction is thus given to "*this place*," Moriah, and it becomes "*the house of the Lord God*," and the place of lawful and established sacrifice.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—30.—*Typical, sin, suffering, sorrow, sacrifice.* The study of the narrative before us, together with its parallel, leads, with little room for hesitation, to the conclusion that there must have been symptoms in the national character of Israel at this time calling for some severe check or peremptory visitation. Failing this supposition, we cannot satisfactorily get over the language of the opening verse in the parallel record of 2 Sam. xxiv. It is, however, undeniable that in both places the history lays the whole head and front of the *offending* upon David, and that the offending was his is corroborated

by his own forcible confession in the seventeenth verse of the present chapter. The brunt of the *suffering*, on the other hand, falls upon the people, who were cut down by the pestilence, and upon those who, from the ties of nature, to say none other, mourned their loss. This is so entirely the tenor of the history, that our exposition has no choice but to follow its lead. And we shall therefore unfold the moral and spiritual significance of the section from the standpoint of David, counting *him* the sinner, holding *him* responsible for the suffering, watching *him* in his struggle to emerge from the consequences of his conduct, and to lift his people out after him, and observing the sanctified result to which all was turned by the over- and ever-ruling providence of God. Let us notice—

I. THE SIN OF DAVID IN NUMBERING THE PEOPLE. (Vers. 1-6.) 1. Whatever was the exact nature of this offence, we are not at liberty to discount it in allowing anything for the consideration already supposed, that Israel was ripe for some punishment, and stood in need of some severe visitation. This may have been true enough. Yet their leader, their shepherd, their king, should have been the first to watch each symptom of the kind, to study them anxiously, to counteract them in place of neglecting them or of co-operating with them, above all of becoming the actual exponent of them. It is for the shepherd to warn, to watch, to keep the flock. For every station in life there are its own proper duties, and for every increased and more exalted privilege of life there are its own proportioned opportunities and responsibilities. This is a moral canon of human life and society, always, everywhere, and that cannot be escaped in its solemn obligation. But how far David practically forgot it appears from this history. It is Scripture that represents it thus to us, that Satan knew the readiness of Israel to fall, designed disastrous damage to the flock, but that he saw and used his opportunity with no miscalculation, “scattering the flock” actually through and by aid of the shepherd. Once this way ascertained to be practicable in this instance, and Satan knew too well for Israel that it was the readiest way, the method most trenchant—easiest for himself, and most humiliating to those for whom he designed harm. A man’s own sphere, special privilege, particular duty, will always have *it in it* to reveal the possibilities of sin, to find the occasion for sin, to enhance the triumph of sin, and to make it burn with fiercer blaze and more lurid glare. Many difficulties have been made out of such detail as the language of Scripture contains here, and in places of similar kind. But Scripture traverses all these, simply ignoring the sceptic’s misuse of them. Scripture keeps in the tracks of the undoubted analogies of *fact*. Israel was ready to go wrong. Granted; but so also was he whose highest work and highest honour it was to watch and to know and to guard Israel from going wrong. 2. David’s sin was the further removed from excuse, in that those who were *second* to him in place and authority put *him* in mind, and remonstrated with him, and evidently with that earnest, nervous feeling which should have been *at once* as good as conviction to him. The offence was deliberate, determined, and would not brook expostulation. For so it is written, “The word of the king prevailed against that of Joab and the captains of the host.” It is the same thing as to say that the word of intolerant and arbitrary authority was encouraged to override the “Law and the testimony,” the suggestions of memory, the remonstrances of conscience, and the kindly spoken, courteous advice of friendly and constitutional counsellors. The man who has it in him to set at nought certain kinds of expression of disapproval, that tell tales so true to nature’s touch, has it in him also, so far at least as that humour is concerned, to set anything at nought. And the impression cannot be resisted that it was just so with David at this crisis. 3. The offence of David in numbering the people, unrelieved as it was by any external considerations, offers also a peculiar kind of evidence of the large infusion of the *moral* element. It is not, indeed, that the record of Scripture fails to furnish the grounds on which his action stood condemned; yet it may be admitted that we feel them to be wanting in some measure in precision. Considering all that resulted from the offence, this very thing proves the larger presence of no technical, no mere ceremonial fault, but of deeper moral fault. Is David condemned by the letter? He is condemned tenfold by the spirit. On the evidence, we are bound to find him guilty on the counts of principle rather than of the violation of positive commandment. Why, for instance, does not Joab in his ill-disguised disgust (which even grew with his task, ver. 6) *quote the commandment*, give chapter and verse for his intense disapproval and indiguation? Oh

yes, there are sins of the heart, of the subtle undergrowth of pride and ambition, and trust of self, which far surpass all others in significance and heinousness. Surely it were enough for the *quondam* shepherd-boy, now King of Israel, to be vicegerent of the King of kings? But David has slipped the charm of modest love and reverent fear and devoted religious service, and aims to be ruler in his *own* right. He does this *just as really* as Judas Iscariot, the disciple, thought it was open to him to compass and supersede the Master if he could. This constitutes the essence of what seems to be held up to view as the *unparalleled* offence of David, that he forgets his subordinate place, and presumes to try to steal an advantage on his own supreme Master. Does David wish to know the number of his fighting men? It is perhaps in part matter of pure vanity, probably in greater part in order to estimate the strength of his *own* supposed resources; in other words, to calculate how far he may afford to dispense with simple, trustful, humble, daily *dependence*—dependence on the Lord his God. Nor was the calculating less or less pernicious, that it was unacknowledged, unconscious.

II. THE SUFFERING ENTAILED BY THE ONE SINFUL DETERMINATION OF ONE MAN. (Vers. 14, 15.) 1. We have to credit David with causing now one of the most dreadful forms of human suffering. The state of mind which is filled with *apprehension* of suffering is itself suffering of the worst kind for any individual. It is not diminished by company, nor distributed by being shared among many. It is terribly intensified when a community, a nation, an army, is the prey of it. First, excited imagination very likely goes beyond the ensuing realities if they were but left to themselves. Then the *facts* result otherwise, and the realities on which the sun in the heavens has looked down in not a few such cases surpass imagination, even to beggaring it. History's very devotee declines to believe. What cries, what wails, what maddened curses must have rent the air wherever the ear of David was to hear, whether he travelled or rested, whether he listened or strove to shut out every sound! When once pestilence walks abroad, it not only kills so many thousands of its own *professional* right, but from hour to hour, from morning to night, it tortures an uncounted number, who "hang in doubt of their life," and have no rest, because they "have no assurance of their life" nor, indeed, of lives dearer to them than their own. And it is *this* which David does for the very flock it was his life-work to fold, to feed, and to shield free even from the breath of fear. 2. We have to credit David with having cut short some seventy thousand human careers. Even though the nation may have deserved the punishment, and their crimes have cried for judgment, David has laden himself with the responsibility of inflicting it. So many streams of human life he has dried up. So many deaths lie at his door. At so many burials the loud mourners and the low mourners, say it is *he* who has rifled the home of life and love, and opened the sepulchre's dark door to receive an untimely prey. Youth he has cut down, beauty he has blighted, in their opening freshest hope. The strong men, the pride and defence of his kingdom, and the support of its homes, *he* has laid weak as the weakest. And for the peaceful or splendid sunsetting of old age *he* has substituted a horizon overspread with the gloomiest clouds. This is what one sinful determination of one man carried through could do, and really did. And it is a type of many, many an antitype. It is a type not least in this one element of it, that it did what it never meant nor thought to do, and yet is to the full answerable for it, because it was not in the path of duty, and was distinctly out of it. Sin sometimes takes *very heavy* toll out of those who do wrong, not because they mean to do so, but because they do not mean *not* to do it, and do not live with watching and prayer. 3. We have to credit David's sin with an incalculable amount of human grief. Not always, by any means, is *he* who is gone the one who deserves most pity, even as *he* certainly is past the reach of any sympathy, but rather those who remain, who *remember*, who grieve, who weep, and not merely "would not be comforted," but *cannot* be comforted, for comfort is not. To wound human affections, to make hearts bleed, to crush human courage, hope, life, is surely among the deadly sins, and to be revealed "in that day." If Abel's blood cried to God from the *very* earth, what cries must have reached him from the innumerable bleeding hearts of bereft homes *now*, wrecked of hope and joy and peace by David!

III. THE STRUGGLE OF DAVID TO EMERGE FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS SIN, AND TO EXTRICATE HIS PEOPLE AFTER HIM. (Vers. 12, 13, 16, 17.) And it must be allowed at once that David begins to resume again his better self. 1. The struggle was the

struggle of conviction, confession, prayer, even to wrestling; *not* the struggle against these. Although it may be held that there is some ambiguity about it, yet a comparison and combination of the two accounts need leave little hesitation as to the real order of things. David's heart "smote him" after that he had numbered the people. Never mind that, it was not quite a spontaneous stirring of the conscience and heart that were within him; yet there was the fact—branded and seared *they* were not. Gad's sudden morning call and message (2 Sam. xxiv. 11) roused David from his torpor in the twinkling of an eye. It was upon this event that conviction, most unreserved confession, entreaty for pardon and mercy, and in due time intercession, followed. And they followed with no other calculation than the calculation most instinctive of an awakened and alarmed soul. The real ring, solemn though the ring was, of other well-known self-condemnation of David, is now unmistakably heard. Not a syllable of excuse, not an accent of extenuation, is to be detected in the tone. 2. The struggle shows David in the midst of the very paroxysm of grief, and fresh from the rebuke of his great Master, to be possessed in a peculiar manner of the wisest and rightest attitude of disposition towards God. (1) God offers an option. David declines it. He has already used his own free will and power to choose once too often. He will renounce it now. (2) In declining to avail himself of that proffered option, he gives a reason, which shows how accurately he had struck the balance between the "mercies" of God and the "hand" of man. It apparently now amounts to an instinct with him, that there was no room for a moment's hesitation between throwing himself and people upon the "mercies" of God, or being thrown into the hands of men. This his strongest impression was also his correctest, which cannot always be said of our strongest and most absolute impressions. "Tis a great lesson for all to learn, and a great fact in the world's history all up to this present moment, that the *paternal* love is to be better trusted than the *fraternal*. The fatherhood of God is, after all, a better-ascertained reality than the brotherhood of humanity. (3) At the very time that David is expecting his punishment, and acknowledging that he is "in a great strait," he honours God by recording a testimony which had come of his own long experience of him: "For very great are his mercies." The rod often brings us to our senses, and when only uplifted will suffice to bring a man to himself. But rarely did David—or any one else who had known, loved, done the truth, but fallen away from it too—recover himself so rapidly and apparently so completely in all essential respects. 3. The struggle offers an undesigned but fine example of an intelligent acknowledgment of the essence of the principle of *sacrifice*. When the scene is gone a little further, and the angel with drawn sword is beheld, David in an agony of pleading is heard beseeching that "the innocent" may be spared. He proclaims who are the innocent (so far, at all events, as *his* act is concerned); he begs that the guilty one may suffer, and proposes himself and his father's house as the justly designated resource for sacrifice. The "altar and the wood," ay, and the knife too, are there, and they shall not want the sacrifice. It seems possible, probable, that not merely (1) David's offer of himself for the object of punishment, but (2) the very fact of his idea and suggestion of submitting to a punishment, all equivalent to *sacrifice*, was acceptable to God. David's importunate expostulation, intercession, prayer—three in one—contain implicitly the principle of sacrifice. And it is observable that it is from that moment that David is authorized, and indeed ordered, to seek a place of sacrifice, and to erect an altar of sacrifice. Thus in the struggle to purge himself as far as possible of his offence, and at least to extricate his people from the fierceness of plague and suffering, he rises to *this* point of view, to entreat that on himself and his father's house may be concentrated the punishment now falling far and wide on a nation.

IV. THE RESULTS TO WHICH ONE MAN'S SIN AND AN IMMENSITY OF CONSEQUENT SUFFERING WERE NOW OVERRULED. (Vers. 26—30.) Some of these results were of special significance in the then time of day, and for the people of Israel. Others are of significance for all ages. 1. For the thousandth time were shown forth these things—the loving fatherly heart of God, the hand that forbore, the yearning pity that "repented" because of its own tenderness of even the most deserved chastisement. Touching indeed is the language of ver. 15. So in older time the Lord himself to the angel, and the angel to Abraham, had cried, "Forbear; it is enough." But not so when that drearer scene gathered in its fulness over Jerusalem. Though twelve legions of

angels looked on, and might have come to the rescue, no voice said "Forbear;" and the only voice that did then speak as with authority—authority notwithstanding *what* it must say and *how* it must say it—said this, "Not my will be done;" and again, "It is finished"—a signal for the awful sacrifice to go on to its solemn end. 2. The stricter typical principle of sacrifice was led up to, and an instance of it exhibited. Blood flows for sin, and the blood of those who were so far forth innocent was now flowing for sin. And this doubtless, though it fell on the innocent, was the *punishment* of sin. But we see David acknowledge the principle that sacrifice may avail to stay the punishment. He, however, viewed, and justly viewed, *himself as the guilty*, and *therefore as the one who ought to suffer*. He does not come before us as an instance of the innocent proposing to suffer in the place of the guilty. The issue is that the sacrifices of the Law were offered in great abundance. 3. By auguries memorable and solemn an altar of sacrifice and a place of worship were designated. They became consecrate for the service of a thousand years at one stretch, and for what more to come we know not. Though we must fail to realize what seemed to David and to Israel greatest in this, yet analogies of the most intrinsic kind guide us in the same direction. Meantime not the grandest building we may raise and dedicate to the worship and glory of God, to the love and service of Jesus, need mean either more or less to us than that site and that altar meant to David and Israel. And, on the other hand, it may with equal truth be said that the humblest building, the least pretentious schoolroom for the service of Christ, means more for knowledge, for heavenly light, for real beauty, than David and the temple, and Solomon and "all his glory."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—A king's pride. The Scripture historians do not conceal David's faults. Though they represent him as the man after God's heart, they faithfully record his grievous defections. He was evidently a man in whom the ordinary principles of human nature were unusually vigorous. There was, accordingly, warmth in his piety, and his sins were those peculiar to an ardent and passionate nature. His warlike impulses led him into cruelty, his amatory passions into adultery, his violence into murder, his self-confidence into the act of regal pride which is condemned in this passage. Accustomed as we are to a periodical census, and indeed to statistics of all kinds, it is difficult for us to understand how blamable was David's conduct in numbering the people.

I. Observe **AT WHOSE INSTIGATION** the king acted. Although in Samuel we are told that the Lord's anger with Israel was the deepest reason for the act and the explanation of all that followed it, our text refers the conduct of David to "an adversary." Whether this enemy was human, or, as is generally supposed, superhuman, diabolical, is not material. A tempter, an adversary, suggested the sinful motive and the disobedient action.

II. Observe **THE MOTIVE** which led to this act. It was a motive often influential with the prosperous and the powerful. It was vanity, confidence in his own greatness, in the number of his soldiers, in the resources of his subjects. David had been a warrior whose arms had been attended with remarkable success, and, like many such, he doubtless deemed himself invincible.

III. Observe **DAVID'S PERSEVERANCE IN SPITE OF WARNING.** Many sins are committed heedlessly. Not so this; for Joab, who was by no means a counsellor always to be trusted, warned his master against this act of folly, which he saw was "a cause of trespass to Israel." David was not to be deterred, and perhaps resented, as such characters are wont to do, any resistance to his will. Temptation from without, evil passions from within, are often enough to overcome the calmest and the wisest counsels and admonitions. A lesson this of human frailty. A summons also to penitence and to humility.—T.

Ver. 8.—Contrition. David was a man who both sinned grievously and repented bitterly. If we have nowhere more striking examples than in his life of human frailty, we have nowhere more than in his recorded experience an example of anguish and of

penitence for sin. Witness the state of mind manifested in the fifty-first psalm. We have in this most touching verse—

I. **CONFESSiON OF SiN.** This language may be regarded as a model of sincerely uttered confession. 1. It was offered to God. "David said unto God." So in Ps. li, "*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.*" Not against society, not against the state; but against the Searcher of hearts and the Judge of all. 2. It was a taking to himself of the guilt. "*I have sinned.*" Instead of laying the blame upon another, the king accepted it for himself. It is a sad thing when men take excuses into the presence of God. 3. David had a just sense of the heinousness of his sin. He felt that he had sinned greatly. It was not in his view a light thing of which he had been guilty. How can we, as Christians, regard sin as a light matter, when we remember that sin brought our holy Saviour, the Lord of glory, to the ignominious cross? 4. The folly of sin was very apparent to David's mind when he poured out his soul in contrite confessions before the Lord. "*I have done very foolishly.*"

II. **ENTREATY FOR PARDON.** It would be a sad case, indeed, if, when the sinner acknowledged his errors and faults, he did so with no hope or expectation of grace and forgiveness. But David knew that God was a God delighting in mercy and ready to forgive. Accordingly he added to his confession this entreaty: "I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant." What abundant encouragement have we to present a prayer like this! The revelation of God's character, the provision of a Divine Redeemer, the promises of a welcome gospel, all alike induce us to come unto God in the attitude, not only of sinners, but of suppliants, beseeching of him a favourable reception, and the extension to us as sinners of his clemency and grace.—T.

Ver. 13.—*Falling into the hand of the Lord.* There is something very simple and touching in this expression. "The hand of the Lord" is, for the most part, mentioned in Scripture as the emblem of God's protecting, upholding, preserving power. Here it indicates *chastisement*. How truly submissive and filial was the spirit which was manifested in this petition! Whether God's hand was raised to deliver or to smite, his servant was content—so that it was God's.

I. **THE LORD SOMETiMEs CHASTENS EVEN REPENTiNG OFFENDERS.** Some unthinking persons may wonder why, if the sinner be penitent and the sin forgiven, there should be any necessity for punishment at all. But facts cannot be explained away. The great Lord and Judge of all does sometimes, as in the instance before us, permit the sinner to endure temporal consequences of sin, although his anger is turned away from the repentant heart. God thus avenges his own Law, upholds his own authority, shows himself a righteous Sovereign and Ruler.

II. **THERE ARE REASONS FOR MEWLY SUBMITTING TO DIViNE CHASTISEMENT.** An alternative of punishment is not God's usual offer to repenting sinners. There is much to commend in the choice which David made when Gad, at the Lord's command, permitted the king to elect one form of penalty rather than another. David referred the matter wholly into "the hand" of a wise and merciful God. There are many reasons why we should thus submit when the Lord chastens. 1. *God is the All-merciful.* For this reason his people may well be content to "fall into his hand." "Very great are his mercies." He is "merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." His character, his promises, and especially his "unspeakable gift," should encourage us to lay aside all rebellion, murmuring, and fear, and to submit with patience, and "endure chastening." It is, no doubt, in his power to punish with far greater severity than any human enemy is capable of doing. But whilst "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel," the mercy of God is boundless as his nature. 2. *God knows, not only the sin, but the repentance by which it is followed.* He reads the heart, and hears the sighs, and marks the tears of every contrite penitent. He sees when a deep impression of the sinfulness of sin has been produced. He knew that though David was a great sinner, he was a sincere, submissive, and lowly penitent. He makes a distinction between the punishment which is a mark of his righteous displeasure with the sin, and that which is needed to bring the offender to a just sense of his ill desert. 3. *God tempers his chastisements with Divine consolations and support.* He does not desert his children, even in their deserved distresses. He is with them in the furnace. When they are ready to sink beneath their merited sorrows, lo! his everlasting arms

are found to be underneath them. **4. God designs, by all his chastening, to secure his people's spiritual good.** He afflicts, not for his pleasure, but for our profit. His purpose is that we may "bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness." Men may wreak malicious vengeance; God's discipline is that of a holy and compassionate Father.—T.

Ver. 15.—God's repentance. How often, in the Scriptures, are human emotions attributed to God! —The charge of "anthropopathy" has, in consequence, sometimes been brought against what we hold to be Divine revelation. The truth is that objectors do not truly believe in the personality of God. The Bible does teach us to think of God as a Person—a living, conscious Being, with moral attributes and purposes. It even speaks, as in the text, of God's repentance.

I. THIS IS NOT THE REPENTANCE OF ONE WHO HAS DONE WRONG. This is the usual application of the word, but it obviously has no place here. The penalty inflicted upon David was a just and deserved one. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" As a Ruler of inflexible righteousness, the Lord demands our reverence and confidence in all the proceedings of his providence.

II. IT IS THE REPENTANCE OF PITY. We find a satisfaction in attributing to the Lord the emotions of pity, of long-suffering, and of love. The spectacle of the suffering nation, and the humbled, afflicted, contrite king, was one which deeply affected the Divine and fatherly heart. Repentance arose upon the perception that the chastening had now answered its purpose in rousing the sense of sin, in bringing the sinner low before the feet of a justly offended Judge and Lord. When the Lord saw this result, his heart relented and his wrath assuaged.

III. IT IS REPENTANCE ISSUING IN SALVATION. Then "he said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thy hand." Pity may be sincere, but ineffectual. Not so with the Divine King. He utters his fiat, and "in the midst of wrath remembers mercy."

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Adore and gratefully praise the forbearance and forgiving mercy of God. 2. Consider the gracious terms upon which clemency is offered. 3. Recognize in the gospel of Christ the supreme illustration of the principle exemplified in the incident recorded in the text.—T.

Ver. 17.—Sin taken home. It is a most pathetic scene. The angel of the Lord, who had smitten with his destroying sword "throughout all the coasts of Israel," was passing by the threshing-floor of the Jebusite. His drawn sword was stretched out over Jerusalem; yet it tell not, for he was bidden to "stay his hand." The king and his princes and counsellors, clad in sackcloth, were prostrate in penitence and supplication before the vision—before the Lord. And David was taking the sin to himself, and invoking the penalty upon himself, as he bowed low before the righteous Judge and Avenger. We observe in David's language—

I. A SPIRIT DIFFERENT FROM THAT OFTEN OBSERVABLE IN MEN'S CONFESSIONS. There is no sign of: 1. A disposition to shift the sin upon others. 2. Or of a willingness that others should bear the penalty of the sin. 3. Or of a tendency to extenuate the guilt of sinful action. We observe—

II. A FRANK AND FULL CONFESSION OF PERSONAL GUILT. This includes: 1. An acknowledgment of his own offence. 2. A submission to the Divine wisdom and justice. He is willing that the hand of God, that is, the chastening and affliction hand, should fall upon him and inflict the strokes which he is well aware he merits.

III. COMPASSION AND INTERCESSION FOR THE UNOFFENDING SUFFERERS. How truly is this David's language! Under the influence of deep emotion he speaks, as men are wont to do in such circumstances, the language of his youth. His poor subjects are, to his view, like guileless, helpless sheep, scattered and smitten. He implores that in compassion it may please the Lord to save them.

IV. THE RECOGNITION BY THE LORD OF THIS SPIRIT AND LANGUAGE. David's attitude was pleasing to the Lord. Reconciliation ensued. An altar was built, and sacrifices offered and accepted. And the angel of the Lord "put up his sword again into the sheath thereof."—T.

Ver. 21—Cheap sacrifice disdained. It is a scene of historical and of sacred interest.

Upon the threshing-floor of the old Jebusite chieftain, the son of Jesse, by his repentance and prayer, secured the cessation of the pestilence which was desolating the land. The Divine command enjoins that on this spot where the plague was stayed, an altar shall be reared to Jehovah in acknowledgment of sparing mercy. The site is the property of Ornan, who with his four sons is threshing wheat. When David approaches, the Jebusite bows before him with reverence. The representatives of "the old order" and "the new" meet together. The scene is truly Oriental. The king asks for the site; the chief offers it as a gift; the king refuses to accept it upon such terms; and an agreement is entered into that the site shall become David's in exchange for six hundred shekels of gold. Thus is acquired the land upon which an altar is built, and which is to become hereafter the site of the splendid temple of Solomon. David's conduct and language convey a general principle of universal validity, viz. that it does not become man to offer, and that God will not accept, a gift or sacrifice which costs the giver nothing.

I. **OUR GOD HAS A RIGHT AND CLAIM TO ALL THAT WE CALL OURS.** We call it ours, but our possession is derived from and is subordinate to his creative bounty, his providential goodness. What have we that we did not receive from him? Our property, and our powers of body and of mind, we have from him and owe to him. That we cannot enrich him by our giving, this is certain. But we can please him and can advantage ourselves by giving to his people and to his cause.

II. **GIFTS AND SACRIFICES THAT COST US NOTHING ARE CONDEMNED AND REJECTED BY GOD.** David felt this, and expressed it in noble and memorable language, when he said, "I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost." Every sincerely religious mind must sympathize with the spirit here displayed. We are reminded that the widow's mite was approved and accepted by our Lord Jesus. It is not the magnitude of the gift, but the proportion of the gift to the giver's means, and, above all, the spirit of self-denial displayed in the act of giving, which meets with the approbation of the Searcher of hearts.

III. **THERE IS PLEASURE AND PROFIT IN SELF-SACRIFICE FOR THE CAUSE OF GOD.** The King of Israel found this to be so in his own experience, and the experience of all who in this have followed his example coincides with David's. Our Lord has said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."—T.

Ver. 26.—*Accepted offerings.* The site of Ornan's threshing-floor, once secured, was without delay consecrated to the appointed purpose. The altar was reared, the priests were summoned, the victims were prepared, the prayers were offered; and then the favour of the Most High was manifested, and the nation was spared.

I. **THE OFFERINGS.** Those which were presented on this occasion were of two kinds. The burnt offerings were typical of the consecration of the worshipper, body, soul, and spirit, to the God of Israel. The peace offerings were expressive of reconciliation and fellowship with Heaven. The appropriateness of both in the case before us is manifest.

II. **THE OFFERER.** In David's offering we remark as characteristic of himself: 1. *His obedience.* As appears from ver. 18, he was acting in literal and immediate compliance with the direction he had received from the Lord through the angel. He had learned from Samuel the seen that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." In this case the sacrifice and the obedience were one. 2. *His prayer.* David called upon the Lord. He was emphatically a man of prayer, and it was in answer to his prayer that the plague was stayed. We learn that his sacrifice was not merely a ceremonial act, but that it was accompanied with spiritual desires and acknowledgments. 3. *His humility and submission.* The king clothed himself in sackcloth and fell upon his face; and the man who in such a spirit sought to avert the Lord's anger would certainly accompany his offering with contrition and submission.

III. **THE ACCEPTANCE.** This was apparent in two ways. 1. God answered him from heaven by fire, thus showing that the sacrifice and the worshipper were not rejected. 2. "The Lord commanded the angel, and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof." His wrath was laid aside, his mercy was manifested, the people were spared.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. The spirit of David is an example to every suppliant sinner who deprecates the wrath, and would be delivered from the condemnation, of the righteous Judge. 2. The offerings of David are a symbol of the one Offering, Christ

Jesus, provided by God himself. 3. The acceptance of David is an encouragement to every true penitent to approach the Lord with confidence, coming in God's own appointed way, and in the spirit God approves.—T.

Vers. 1-8.—*Human action.* Probably there will always remain a measure of mystery about this act of numbering the nation. We shall always be more or less uncertain as to the precise elements of wrong which God saw in it, and which brought down so terrible a condemnation and penalty. There are, however, some features of the whole transaction which are certain and which are instructive. We see—

I. THAT THE SOURCES WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO ONE HUMAN ACTION ARE MANIFOLD. 1. We see by the narrative in 2 Sam. xxiv. 1 that God *at least permitted it* to occur. "He moved David . . . to say, Go, number," etc. 2. We see (ver. 1) that Satan incited David to the act. 3. The king's own feeling and judgment had most of all to do with it; this was *the source of the evil*. David persisted in it against better counsel (vers. 3, 4). 4. It may be fairly contended that the condition of the people helped to account for it. We may infer from 2 Sam. xxiv. 1 that God was displeased with Israel, and that his displeasure accounted for the absence of the Divine intervention which would otherwise have held back the king from his folly. Our acts are seldom, if ever, so simple as they seem; usually, if not always, more sources contribute to them than are seen upon the surface. They spring from hidden habits which have long been rooting and growing in the heart; they are the consequence of our own volition at the moment; they are the result of the agency of others who surround and influence us; they are affected by unseen forces which play upon us from below and also from above. We are sure of this, yet we are equally sure—

II. THAT WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS WE COMMIT. "God was displeased with this thing" (ver. 7). He saw in it that which was sinful and wrong, worthy of Divine condemnation, calling for Divine retribution. Moreover, David owned to himself and confessed to God his personal guiltiness: "I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing," etc. (ver. 8). No analysis of the forces which are at work upon and within us can affect the question of responsibility. 1. God "will not hold us guiltless" if we break his laws, if we wrong our neighbours, if we injure ourselves. 2. Nor shall be able to acquit ourselves. It will be long before sin will so harden us that we shall not suffer keenly from the reproaches of our own conscience, and then it will not be long before that fire within is rekindled by the hand of God, and its terrible flame will burn up all sophistries of the soul. 3. Nor will our fellow-men exonerate us; they will condemn us freely, and we must suffer the sting of their censure.

III. THAT THE RECTITUDE OR WRONGNESS OF AN ACTION DEPENDS MAINLY ON THE MOTIVE by which it is inspired. The act of numbering the people was not intrinsically wrong (see Exod. xxx. 12, 13). When the census was taken in order to ascertain what was due to the service of Jehovah or of the state, it was positively good and commendable. But on this occasion, when it was done, as we must presume, in a vain-glorious spirit, in order that the king might boast of the increasing number of his subjects, or else in a faithless spirit, that the king might know on what he could rely—forgetting that his confidence was not in the arm of flesh, but in the living God—then it became sinful, condemnable, disastrous. Almost everything is in the motive of our deeds. The fairest actions in the sight of man may be hollow or utterly corrupt in the sight of him who looketh on the heart (1 Sam. xvi. 7). The simplest and smallest actions may be great and noble in the estimate of him who measures with heavenly scales each human thought and deed.

IV. THAT THE GOOD OR EVIL OF A HUMAN ACTION IS NOT DETERMINED BY THE CHARACTER OF THE AGENT OR HIS JUDGES. Usually the good man does the good thing, but not invariably. Usually the man of lower excellence takes the wrong view when he differs from the man of greater worth; but not necessarily. Evidently a Joab may be right when a David is wrong. It was antecedently likely, in a high degree, that if these two men differed in any point, David would take the true and Joab the false view. But here it was otherwise (vers. 3, 4). On this occasion the better man might have learned from his spiritual inferior. We do well to expect good deeds from good men, and, when they seem to be wrong, to suspend our judgment until we have searched everything through. But we must not trust blindly to the reputed worthies

of our day, or we may be following a good man when he is in error; or we may be simply putting ourselves into the hands and walking in the steps of scribes and Pharisees. With the help of God's Word and his Spirit we are to "judge of ourselves what is right" (Luke xii. 57).—C.

Ver. 8-13.—*The human and the Divine in the hour of penitence.* We have illustrated here—

I. THE HUMAN APPROACH TO GOD in the hour of penitence. "David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant," etc. (ver. 8). Here is, what there ever should be, (1) a deep sense of sin in the soul; (2) a frank admission of guilt, in word; (3) a prayer that it may be put away, or forgiven; (4) an intention to put it away from our own heart and life.

II. THE DIVINE OVERTURE TO MAN. God met the attitude of his penitent servant with *forgiveness and a penalty*. Thus he met David's penitence before. "David said . . . I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit . . . the child shall surely die" (2 Sam. xii. 13, 14). On the present occasion God offered David his mercy (not, indeed, expressed, but clearly understood), accompanied by a penalty in respect of which he might exercise his own judgment. In the choice which Jehovah thus offered David there was something exceptional. In his dealing with mankind God does, indeed, give us the one alternative of going on in sin with utter ruin at the end of it, or repentance and forgiveness with some penalty to be paid for past offences; but this is the only option he gives us. If we come to him, like David, penitently and trustfully, owning transgression, and pleading for mercy through Jesus Christ, he will reinstate us in our forfeited position, he will pardon and accept us as his reconciled children, and he will require of us that we suffer the necessary and inevitable consequences of our past misdeeds. If we have wasted our youth in folly, he gives us a regenerated and holy manhood and age, but he condemns us to go forward with a sense that we have lost for ever a large portion of the opportunity of life. If we have injured our health, enfeebled our intellect, and impaired our moral and spiritual force by guilty indulgences, he grants us his mercy and a cleansed and purified future, but he sends us on our way with a lessened manhood and talents reduced that should have been multiplied and enlarged. If we have thrown away the esteem and affection of the wise and holy, he receives us, when penitent, into the embrace of his Divine affection, but he makes us pay the penalty of our folly by climbing slowly up the steeps of regained reputation and of renewed confidence and love. Forgiveness, not unattended with inevitable penalty,—that is the overture of God to the repentant sinner. In the penalty we pay there is no choice allowed us. The moral laws of the universe are simply not inverted or annulled; they do their work upon and within us: only with his pardoning love comes his Divine grace to enable us to endure, and to give us the victory in the strife.

III. THE HUMAN RECEPTION OF THE DIVINE OFFER. The spirit of David was one of holy submission; he said, "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are his mercies" (ver. 13). In the acceptance of the overture and in the choice which he made, David expressed a devout and obedient disposition. This is to be our spirit also. We are (1) gratefully to accept the mercy of the Lord; (2) cheerfully to bear whatever penalty the guilty past may carry on into the near future; (3) gladly to believe that the further future will free us from all consequences of sin, and hold nothing in its hand but Divine grace and goodness.—C.

Ver. 13.—*Tolerable and intolerable troubles.* These are not only—

I. THE LESSER AND THE LARGER TRIALS OF OUR LIFE. Those, on the one hand, which cause temporary inconvenience, or slight annoyance, or little regret; and those, on the other hand, which upset all our plans, or remove that which nothing can restore, or cut to the quick our lacerated and bleeding hearts. Not only these, as thus regarded, but also—

II. THOSE WHICH ARE UNATTENDED AND THOSE WHICH ARE ACCOMPANIED WITH REMORSE. 1. When our troubles come upon us as the consequence of our fidelity and

devotion, the source of them is a positive alleviation of our pain of mind. 2. When they arrive as the consequence of forces with which we have nothing to do, our mental pain is neither soothed nor aggravated by their source. 3. When we have to reproach ourselves as the authors of our own miseries, our souls smart with a keenness of suffering which makes us feel that "our punishment is greater than we can bear." But our troubles are divided into the tolerable and the intolerable (or the less tolerable) when, as suggested by the text, we view them as—

III. THOSE WHICH ARE OF DIVINE AND THOSE WHICH ARE OF HUMAN INFILCTION.

David uttered a sentiment which is common to every pious heart when he said, "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; . . . but let me not fall into the hand of men." When the evils which are oppressing us, when the sorrows which are saddening us, are embittered by the feeling that they are due to the *heedlessness* and *heartlessness* of men, especially when due to the inconsiderateness of those whose relation to ourselves calls for peculiar thoughtfulness and attention—and still more, when they are inflicted on us by the *positive malignity* of our fellows, who find a cruel and horrible satisfaction in our losses and griefs, then our trouble is at its very heaviest, and seems to us quite intolerable. But when, as in unaccountable sickness, or in unavoidable loss, or in inevitable bereavement, we can feel that the hand of God is upon us, that we have "fallen into the hand of the Lord, and not into the hand of man," then we are not tempted to add the bitterness of resentment to the heaviness of disappointment or to the poignancy of grief. It is well for us to remember: 1. That even those troubles which seem to be wholly of human origin are yet to be borne as evils permitted of God. If David had chosen defeat in war, that would have had the Divine as well as the human in its origin and infliction. In our very worst distress, in the most cruel aggravations we can experience, we should "be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live." He allows them to come; he would have us be patient and docile under them; he will bring us out from under them; he will overrule them for good in his own time and way. 2. That we have reason to be thankful when the trouble that comes to us is such as we can readily ascribe to the Father's hand. We must all pass through tribulation on our way to the heavenly kingdom: only by the waters of chastisement can we hope to be cleansed from some sins which beset us. It is well for us when the sorrow through which the Divine Father makes us to pass is of such a kind that we have no difficulty in referring it to his wisdom and love, and when, feeling that we have "fallen into the hands of God," we can (1) breathe freely the spirit of resignation, (2) learn readily the lessons of affliction.—C.

Vers. 14—27.—*The arrested hand.* The hand of Divine wrath was stretched out, and dire calamity ensued. "The Lord sent pestilence upon Israel, and there fell . . . seventy thousand men" (ver. 14). And God sent an angel of destruction to Jerusalem: this terrible messenger stood with drawn sword (ver. 16) over the city of David, and commenced the dread work of death there (ver. 15). But suddenly the hand of God was arrested, the sword of the angel was sheathed, the ravages of the pestilence ceased, Jerusalem was saved. Whence this salvation? It is clear—

I. THAT GOD'S DIRECT DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL HAD NO SMALL PART IN THE MATTER.

The king was vastly more responsible than any other individual in the realm for the coming of the visitation, and he was more concerned in its departure than any other. But the people of Israel were not irresponsible for the one, nor were they without a share in the other. It would have been impossible for us to believe that the multitudes of Israel would suffer as they did for this sin of David, absolutely irrespective of their own deservings; that would have been manifestly unjust. And, similarly, we should have found the greatest difficulty in believing that Divine compassion had nothing to do with the cessation of the plague. But the Scriptures sanction the conclusion of our judgment, if they do not suggest or even affirm it—that the coming and the going of the pestilence were partly due to the direct relations of God to Israel. Respecting its coming, we read that "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them," etc. (2 Sam. xxiv. 1). Respecting its going, we read that "the Lord, beheld, and he repented him of the evil," etc. (ver. 15); i.e. the pity of the Lord was stirred, and he stayed his hand. We may learn here the lessons that God has direct dealings with nations, approving their piety and their purity,

condemning their ingratitude and disobedience, rewarding the one and punishing the other.

II. THAT IT WAS LARGELY DUE TO THE KING'S INTERCESSION. (Vers. 16, 17.) Though it is not positively stated that the withdrawal of the angel's hand was owing to the attitude and action of the king and the elders, yet we may safely assume that in large measure it was so (ver. 27). There was everything in David's spiritual posture to draw down a Divine response. 1. He was penetrated with a spirit of penitence; he freely and frankly owned that the sin was his: "It is I that have sinned and done evil." 2. He was filled with a pure compassion for his people: "These sheep, what have they done? . . . not on thy people," etc. (ver. 17). 3. He was animated by a spirit of noble self-renunciation. No doubt the desire of founding a royal dynasty had grown strong and intense with years of sovereignty, and must have struck very deep root in David's heart; yet he offers to resign all his hopes if the people may be spared. "Let thine hand . . . be on me and on my father's house." When intercession is thus humble, compassionate, and self-renouncing, it is likely to prevail with God.

III. THAT IT WAS SUITABLY ATTENDED WITH SACRIFICE. (Vers. 18-26.) David was instructed by God to "set up an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Ornan" (ver. 18). After the usual Oriental ceremonies, the king purchased the site and reared the altar: there he offered sacrifices of propitiation, dedication, and gratitude; there he presented burnt offerings and peace offerings (ver. 26); and Jehovah signified his acceptance of the penitential and sacrificial spirit of his servants by "answering from heaven by fire upon the altar" (ver. 26). There are times when we renew our return unto the Lord, and he renews his acceptance of us. Such a time is the hour when we have sinned and have suffered. Then it becomes us to return once again unto the Lord, (1) in penitence; (2) in the exercise of faith in the one atoning sacrifice of the Divine Redeemer; (3) in rededication of ourselves; (4) in gratitude for his saving mercy.—C.

Ver. 28—ch. xxii. 5.—Divine overruling and human service. In the concluding verses of one chapter and the opening verses of the other, we learn some lessons as to the way in which Divine wisdom made the past, which was one of error, prepare for the future, which was one of honour and even of glory. We also learn two things respecting human service. We see—

I. How God can constrain an evil to furnish incidental good. The sin of David led to the pestilence; the pestilence spread to Jerusalem. At Jerusalem David and the elders came forth to intercede with God; and, so doing, they sacrificed on the threshing-floor of Ornan. The fear of the angel of destruction impelled David to begin and (probably) to continue to sacrifice there (ver. 30). At any rate, the offering on this one occasion led naturally, if not necessarily, to the continuance of the act in the same place. This led to the determination to choose the spot as the site for the future temple; and this to the king's energetic and successful preparation for the erection of that noble edifice. Thus from evil came incidental good; and thus, continually, human error, faultiness, and transgression are made, under the far-reaching and overruling hand of the Supreme, to contribute in some way to good. Thus he "maketh the wrath of man to praise him" (see Acts viii. 3, 4; Phil. i. 12).

II. How suitable was the site for the temple of the Lord. 1. Taken from a Canaanite, it suggested and predicted the ultimate triumph of the truth of God over all human error. The kingdom of God would rise and stand in every heathen land, as the temple of Jehovah rose and stood on Gentile soil. 2. It was suitable that a threshing-floor should become the base of a temple. Where God gives to us all nourishment for our necessities, there we, in glad response, may well give back to him all worship of the soul, all thanksgiving of heart and tongue, all offerings of the treasury.

III. How godly zeal will find a reason and a sphere for its activity. David's desire to build the temple had been positively disallowed. Any man in his position who had not that work very much at heart would have abandoned all further concern on the subject, and left the matter to his successor. But David's heart was so full of holy zeal for the "house of the Lord," that he caught with eagerness at the idea of making preparation for it, though he was not permitted to erect it. "This is the house of the Lord God," etc. (ver. 1), and forthwith he pressed into the service masons

to hew stones (ver. 2), and prepared abundance of iron and brass, and of cedar (vers. 2-4). Thus his zeal discovered a *sphere* of activity; nor was he wanting in the discernment of a *reason* for action. He might have argued that while his advancing age would excuse inaction on his part, the youth of Solomon would ensure and demand the utmost activity. That is the light in which lukewarmness would have viewed it. Not so the king. He argued that, as Solomon his son was young and tender, and the house was to be magnificent, etc. (see ver. 5), he had better bring his experience to the work, that it might be as complete as possible. If we are really in earnest in the work of the Lord, we shall not see the reasons which might be found for our abstention or delay; we shall readily observe strong grounds for immediate and strenuous exertion. What is seen, in this as well as in other spheres, depends far more upon the eye than upon the object.

IV. HOW MUCH ROOM THERE IS IN THE FIELD OF HOLY USEFULNESS FOR THE EXPERIENCE OF LATER YEARS. There is good reason why all the work of the Lord should *not* be left to those who are "young and tender." By all means let maturity bring its solid strength; and let age, also, bring its varied experience, its gathered and garnered wisdom to the chamber of consultation and the field of labour. "Old age hath yet its honour and its toil," its witness to bear, its counsel to give, its work to finish.—C.

Vers. 1-6.—David numbering the people. In considering this act of David, our attention must be first directed to the statement in the very first verse of this chapter, in connection with the corresponding passage in 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. In one chapter it is stated that "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel;" in the latter passage it is said, "Again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them." Manifestly there needs some way of reconciling these two statements so apparently conflicting. The latter passage implies that there was some guilt in Israel for God to take this step, and this may be found in the rebellions of Absalom and Sheba against David's kingdom. The word "again" points back to the judgment of God on Israel recorded in 2 Sam. xxi. But although there was guilt on the *nation* on account of these rebellions, David himself was the instrument by which Israel was to be punished. On the other hand, there was, as Joab's words imply, considerable pride and vanity in David's heart in wishing for this census of the people. As he was about to glory in the number of his people, God reduced that number by seventy thousand, so that he should not have the glory. God's law is to compel wickedness *hid in the heart* to manifest itself *outwardly* by furnishing the opportunities for its manifestation. Hence it is perfectly true to say, on the one hand, that *God* used David's sin to punish Israel for their guilt, and, on the other, that *Satan* moved David to number them. The latter was but God giving David the opportunity for the evil of his heart to manifest itself, while of course Satan was the *source* of that evil. God used David's sin to punish Israel; God gave the opportunity to David to number Israel in order to manifest the evil of David's heart outwardly. Thus God punished Israel and humbled David. This may suggest to us the difference in the Bible between trial and temptation. In the Book of Genesis it is said, "God did tempt [or, 'try'] Abraham." In the Epistle of James it is said of God, "Neither tempteth he any man." God *tries*; Satan *tempts*. Let us illustrate. Some thousands of pounds are lying on the parlour table when a servant enters the room. This is a *trial* of the servant's honesty, and thus is from God. Satan says, "Steal some;" this is the *temptation*. So that every *trial* from God may at the same time be a *temptation* from Satan. To return now to the act of David in numbering the people. We have seen the sin of this act in that he was about to glory in the number of his people. "No flesh shall glory in his presence;" and so God reduced the number by seventy thousand. The mention of Satan as the author of this act is intended to show us that David's purpose in it was, from the very first, an ungodly thing. Joab was aware of this, and regarded the act as "abominable." His language in reply to the king indicates its enormity: "Why will he be a cause of *trespass* to Israel?" The word "trespass" here is significant. It means not only a *trespass committed*, but one which must be *atoned* for. This shows in what a heinous light he regarded David's act. The king's word prevailed, however, and Joab reluctantly obeyed. Levi and Benjamin were not counted with the number.

The tribe of Levi was always exempt in such censuses, and the tribe of Benjamin was not numbered because David, in the mean time, having become conscious of his sin, stopped the census before it was completed. Joab gave the sum of the people to the king. It amounted to one million one hundred thousand men in Israel. This great population in so limited an extent of country is a proof of the fulfilment of the promise (Gen. xv. 5). Such great prosperity, however, is too frequently a snare, as it was in this case. It proved too strong a temptation to David's pride and vanity; and though the Lord used it to discipline David's soul into deeper humility, it led to lamentable consequences. We see how little God can trust his children long with prosperous circumstances. It is for this reason the pressure of God's hand is laid on many of them, and continued, in one form or another, through life; for, were it withdrawn, the heart would soon wander from God, and run the risk of forfeiting its heavenly inheritance, or its future glorious reward.—W.

Vers. 7-18, 29, 30.—*Effects of David's sin.* The first effect of David's act was that of incurring God's severe displeasure. David's eyes were opened to see his sin and its greatness. In earnest prayer he besought God to "do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." This, however, cannot be. Sin may be forgiven but its sad consequences must be felt. A man who has brought ruin upon himself and family by a sinful life may have all his sin forgiven, but he must suffer the consequences and his family also, it may be, for generations to come. Nothing is more palpable on every side of us than this law in God's moral government—"visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;" and "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." In David's sin we see also another law in God's moral government—a man's punishment is always in the same line of his sin. David's pride was in the great number of his people; the punishment lay in the destruction of seventy thousand of that number. There is an unvarying connection between the two, indicating the law of righteous retribution. As a judgment the Lord offered David his choice of three evils, and in David's answer we see the true wisdom of a chastened and humbled child of God. "And David said unto God, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man. So the Lord sent a pestilence, and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men." It is the truest wisdom of the soul in every such emergency to fall into the hand of God. Our loving Father does all things well; and while we must reap what we have sown in order to learn by deep experience what a bitter thing sin is, "a Father's hand will never cause his child a needless tear." God hates sin, and he will have us learn what a fearful thing it is that we may hate it too. The hand of God in this outpour of judgment is vividly pictured in this portion of the chapter. "And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem;" but just as he had begun to destroy, we are told God said, "It is enough, stay now thine hand." How much greater might the destruction have been but for him who in the midst of judgment remembers mercy! Yes, in the midst of all our judgments, our trials, our sufferings, how much greater they might have been, may each one say! We can count our trials, but never our mercies. They are as the sands of the shore or the stars over our heads. The darkest cloud has ever a silver lining. And so it is here. There was another effect of David's sin besides this terrible destruction of Israel, for in its results sin is always hydra-headed. Each one carries with it a fruitful crop. We find this effect in David's own relation to God (ver. 30). "He was afraid." Exactly the same words are used by Adam in the garden, and the slothful servant in the New Testament. Sin produces *distance* from God. David was as truly behind a tree as Adam in the garden. Peace, communion, freedom, all that sweet interchange of fellowship between God and the soul, have all gone now! O Sin, how terrible art thou in thy consequences! One more thought is suggested by this portion of the chapter. The tabernacle of the Lord and the altar of burnt offering were at this time at Gibeon. Here was the prescribed place of sacrifice and here, according to orthodox ideas, David should have gone to offer his sacrifices. But God can give a man rest anywhere. He can apply his mercy to the soul and accept its sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving as well in Ornan's barn as

on Gibeon's high places. David had seen the sheathed sword and the hallowed fire from heaven, not on Gibeon's heights, but in Ornan's barn. Whatever orthodoxy might think of the former, the latter was God's chosen place for the temple. God's *ex-er-ic-enced* mercy, where justice had sheathed its sword and grace had answered prayer, made the ground *hallowed*. It is so still; and may every member of the Church of Christ never forget it.—W.

Vers. 18—27, ch. xxii. 1.—Ornan's threshing-floor. It was in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite that the angel of the Lord sheathed his sword and where the voice of the Lord was heard, “It is enough, stay now thine hand.” There, by Divine command, the altar was to be reared. The Lord's altar in a barn! Well, what matters it? The altar hallows the barn. Christ is the true sacrificial Altar, and whatever or whoever he touches becomes the “temple of the Holy Ghost.” Ornan was probably the Hebrew or Jewish name of the owner of this threshing-floor; Araunah his Jebusite or Canaanitish name. We see in the twenty-third verse the noble generosity of this man in offering to present David with the threshing-floor, oxen, instruments, and wheat, free of cost. It is true that in some cases (see Gen. xxxii.) this apparent generosity, accompanied with so much Eastern courtesy and politeness, is only a thin guise to cover larger expectations from those to whom it is made. This Abraham well knew when he so resolutely declined the offer of the sons of Heth. This was not the case with Ornan. His was the offspring from the noble and generous heart of one who loved and served God. The inspired penman gives us the true interpretation of Ornan's offer when he says (2 Sam. xxiv. 23), “All these things did Araunah, *as a king*, give unto the king.” But however kingly Araunah's conduct was here, David felt he could not accept it. God must not be put off with that which costs us nothing. “Thou hast offered me no sweet cane *with money*,” was God's charge of old against Israel. “Ye offer the blind and the lame for sacrifice. Is it not evil?” said Malachi. It is the law of life. That which costs us nothing is not worth having; how much less when offered to God! The widow's two mites are of more value than all the gifts of gold in the temple chest. So David would only have the threshing-floor for the Lord's temple at the “full price.” And mark the typical character of this threshing-floor. It was there the sword of vengeance was sheathed. It was there God's voice was heard, “Stay now thine hand, it is enough.” It was there the hallowed fire descended in token of God's acceptance of the victim on the altar; and there consequently the future temple was to be erected which exceeded in glory all that Israel had ever seen. So, centuries after, the cross of Christ was the substance of which all this was only the shadow. In that cross we see the sword of God's wrath against sin for ever sheathed. We hear God's voice saying, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!” In the midnight darkness, the earthquake, the rent rocks, the opened graves, and the rent veil, we hear God's voice again from heaven, testifying to the majesty of that Sacrifice, and drawing from the lips of even heathen bystanders, “Surely this was the Son of God.” And on that Sacrifice, that one Offering once offered, we see built the great spiritual temple of Christ's body, the Church. “Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Christ Jesus.” May we take up David's language and say, “This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.”—W.

Ver. 1.—Satanic temptations. The passage similar to this in 2 Sam. xxiv. 1 should be compared with it. The word *Satan* would have been more correctly translated *an adversary*; and the sentence in Samuel would be correctly rendered, “One moved David against them.” The historical fact appears to be that one of the courtiers pressed this evil advice on the king, and the Bible writers properly see in such a man a tempter, an adversary, a Satan; and they recognize in all the consequences that follow the outworking of Divine judgments. The question of the Bible presentation of a chief evil spirit need not be discussed in connection with this passage. It is to one aspect only of the influence of such a being that our attention is directed. The Miltonic figure of Satan should be carefully distinguished from the Biblical; and in the instance before us the “adversary” is treated as a Divine agency used for the *testing* of God's people by temptation to sin. If we fully accept the idea of the Divine education and training of men, it will be no

difficulty to us that times of moral trial should be found, and subjection to evil enticements should form part of the Divine plan. We know that God tries and tests us by *things*, and it should not be difficult for us to realize that he may try and test us by *persons*. This is, indeed, our most subtle and most severe form of testing. A man may stand firm under all the various trials of affliction, and fall at last under the temptings and delusions of subtle sin. This is the point in David's case. We should notice the time in his life when this severe temptation came. It was when we might reasonably have assumed that David was confirmed in goodness. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Interesting comparisons may be made with Abraham, tested late in life by the command to offer his son; and with Job, tried, when fully established in family and property, by the sudden loss of all, and his own extreme bodily suffering. David's trial came when all his enemies were subdued, and his kingdom extended to its widest limits. We cannot suppose that the mere act of taking a census of the people was regarded as wrong. All acts gain their qualities by the spirit in which they are done, and David's wrong was wrong of purpose and of will.

I. SATANIC TEMPTATIONS REGARDED AS HUMAN PERIL. Illustrate from our Lord's words to St. Peter, "Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Danger-times occur again and again in a man's life. He must conceive of his spiritual foe as ever on the watch for the weak, unguarded moment. Illustrate the Satanic opportunities found in times of frail health, of success in undertakings, of circumstances having an exciting character, of carnal security, of flattery, or of pride. Especially show that the moments of rebound from success, and exhaustion after victory, put us in extreme peril. Skilfully adjusting temptations to a man's stronger side, Satan has oftentimes succeeded. Every hour is an hour of peril, and we need the hourly prayer, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

II. SATANIC TEMPTATIONS REGARDED AS DIVINE DISCIPLINE. We may not separate any of the things happening to us in life from the Divine purpose and overruling. What we call evil is properly seen as part of the Divine agency for our moral culture. Divine overrulings do not change the *character* or *quality* of things, but they directly affect the *result* of things. All life is probation. We are being moulded in righteousness. So we find that even these strange Satanic temptations serve gracious Divine purposes in the individual man; and when we cannot see this, we may see that they serve gracious Divine purposes in the warning and teaching of others, and that some of us may even, as David, stumble unto falling *vicariously*.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*The sin of self-gratulation.* The narrative does not clearly and explicitly state David's intention in thus commanding a census of the people to be made. Probably he desired to know the numbers of the people of his kingdom as it had been extended by successful war; but this he wished rather for his own self-glorying than for national purposes. It was an act of self-will, and it failed from full loyalty to the theocratic idea which had been so well maintained during David's reign. In just *this* lay its sin and its mischief. Dean Stanley calls the taking of this census "an attempt not unnaturally suggested by the increase of his power, but implying a confidence and pride alien to the spirit inculcated on the kings of the chosen people. The apprehension of a Nemesis on any overweening display of prosperity, if not consistent with the highest revelations of the Divine nature in the gospel, pervades all ancient, especially all Oriental, religions." And Ewald says, "The only satisfactory explanation of this measure is that it was intended as the foundation of an organized and vigorous government, like that of Egypt or Phoenicia, under which the exact number of the houses and inhabitants of every city and village would have to be obtained so as to be able to summon the people for general taxation. But it is well known what a profound aversion and what an instinctive abhorrence certain nations, ancient and modern, harbour against any such design which they dimly suspect, not perhaps without good reason, is likely to result in a dangerous extension of the governing power, and its encroachment on the sanctity of the private home." We may notice what peril often lies in the return of temptation upon a man after he has conquered it. David had warred in loyal dependence on God, but he fell when attempting to gather up the results of his victory. A camp is never so exposed to attack as in the time of exhaustion and

over-confidence that immediately succeeds a victory. Illustrate from the power that lies in the backward suck of a broken wave.

I. **SELF GRATULATION ON ACCOUNT OF RESULTS OF LABOUR.** Compare Nebuchadnezzar's boasting over great Babylon. Contrast the spirit manifested in St. Paul's boastings. He says, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Show how keen we are for results, both in business and in religious spheres. The miser delights to count up his hoards, and the religious man is in peril of self-satisfaction in reckoning up his converts. Few of us can bear to have the true fruitage of our life-labour shown us yet; and we learn to think it most wise and good of our great Master that he puts off the harvest-day until by-and-by. Then we may venture to come "bringing our sheaves with us." Enough now for us is the joy of workers in their work.

II. **SELF GRATULATION ON ACCOUNT OF SPIRITUAL TRIUMPHS.** Illustrate from the peril of the hermit, monk, or nun; persons who devote themselves wholly to spiritual culture. Show that the *humility* they seek is ever slipping from their grasp, and subtle *pride* is asserting its place. St. Simeon Stylites on his pillar was probably prouder than any king. And so now exclusive attention to the training of feelings and emotions tends to self-gratulation. Perhaps more men are proud of their *goodness* than proud of their *greatness*. Against this subtle and insidious form of evil we all need to watch. And the great Heart-searcher needs to cleanse the very *thoughts* and *heart*, finding out for us our secret wicked ways.

III. The **SINFULNESS** of all self-gratulation is seen in the evil influence of it on others. Some it excites to imitations. Others it impresses with our insincerity, and so with an idea of the worthlessness of all religion. It prevents our exercising a good influence on others. Nothing more certainly shuts up a man's power than the impression he may produce of his pride and self-conceit. Whatever we may win, one law applies—*don't boast*.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*The spirit that refuses good advice.* Joab was not always a good adviser. More than once he had led David into difficulties. But he was a skilful and bold statesman. He looked rather to the consequences and ultimate influences of political actions than to the maintenance of high political principles. In this case he feared more the *penalty* that would follow than the sin itself. But his advice was good. We may not say that even good advice is necessarily to be taken. Our judgment concerning it should be exercised, and our decisions upon it should be made. That which is absolutely good, or in a general way good, may not be the best thing at a particular time, or for a particular individual.

I. **GOOD ADVICE MAY BE UNACCEPTABLE IN ITSELF.** It may demand hard things or unpleasant things. It may be difficult to discern the grounds on which it is based. It may involve humiliations and confessions of mistake. It may bring heavy responsibilities. It may unduly strain feeling. It may be quite different from the advice we expected. It may seem, to our judgment, anything but good.

II. **GOOD ADVICE MAY BE UNACCEPTABLE THROUGH THE PERSON WHO GIVES IT.** We estimate the value of advice by the giver. Our confidence in *him* gives quality to his advice. Probably David was at this time so annoyed with Joab that his eyes were blinded, and he could not see how wise his counsel was. To judge advice by the giver is, as a rule, quite safe; but care is needed lest prejudice should prevent our recognizing the good in the counsel of those we dislike, and lest undue affection should prevent our seeing the error in the advice of those whom we may personally esteem. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend," etc.

III. **GOOD ADVICE MAY BE UNACCEPTABLE THROUGH THE STATE OF MIND OF THE PERSON WHO RECEIVES IT.** There may be a proud unwillingness to receive advice at all; an over and undue self-reliance. There may be a strong purpose and resolve against which the advice goes, as in David's case.

So we learn that to be proper recipients of good advice from our fellow-men, or from God's Word, we need to win and to keep the *humble, open heart*.—R. T.

Vers. 7, 8.—*Judgment revealing iniquity.* In these verses it is noted that God's judgment on sin revealed the sinfulness of his doings to the sinner. "God is known by the judgment that he executeth." Still, it is largely true that men do not see their

sin in its proper light until they come under the sufferings which it involves. Illustrate by the licentious man and the drunkard. God's plan is to affix consequences to sin, and make these always to be of an afflictive and distressing and humiliating character, so that by them the character and quality of sin might be shown up. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Illustrations are at hand in Old Testament history, ordinary national histories, and modern life. "Though hand join in hand, the sinner shall not go unpunished." The consequences of sin come in a great variety of forms, but always with precise adaptation to the moral purpose which God holds in view in sending them. If the sin be only that of a man as an *individual*, the consequences may come wholly on the man's body. If the sin be that of a man as a *father*, the consequences may be such as will affect the family. And if the sin be that of a man as a *king*, we may reasonably expect that the consequences will reach to affect the nation. And this is the case of David which is now before us for consideration. An act is right or wrong, according to God's eternal laws, whoever does it; but acts gain some of their precise qualities through the relational or representative character of the persons who do them; and this often affords the true explanations of the particular judgments that attend them.

I. DAVID'S SIN. His act, considered apart from his state of mind and his purpose, cannot be called wrong. We at least are familiar with the idea of taking census, and understand it to be a necessary attendant on orderly government. Two things aid us in recognizing David's sin. 1. The sentiment of Eastern peoples concerning a census; they regarded it as imperilling their liberty, and as a state device for inflicting on them a tyrannous taxation. 2. David was not an independent sovereign; he was Jehovah's prince; and such a work as this should only have been undertaken at the direct command of the true King. In a previous sketch, on ver. 2, the precise character of David's act has been shown. His purpose was *vain-glory*. He would boast of the great kingdom he had founded; so he utterly failed from the *theocratic kingship* with which he had been entrusted. And his sin was that of the *king*; it was part of his government; and, therefore, it affected the people whom he governed, and the consequences fell on him through them, just as the judgments on parental sin come on parents through their children.

II. ITS CONSEQUENCES IN THE DIVINE ADMINISTRATION. These were apparently special. Gad, God's prophet, announced the impending judgments, bidding David select which of them should fall. But this speciality is only in appearance, and it is designed to be illustrative of the ordinary and orderly judgments which are surely wrought out in God's providences. Sometimes God permits us to *trace processes*, but it is only that we may gain full conviction of the essential connections between sin and suffering. Much is made in our day of the working of law in nature. It would be altogether healthier and better for us to make much of the working of law in morals. No law is so absolute as this one: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

III. THE REVEALING POWER OF SUCH CONSEQUENCES. That is, their power to disclose and impress the character of men's sins, as viewed by God. In the narrative before us, the impressions made on the *king* (ver. 8), on the *people*, and, through these, upon us, may be illustrated.

The mission of all judgments and so-called calamities is here shown. The revelations which they make are (1) a vindication of God; (2) a gracious aid to a worthy apprehension of God; and (3) the only way to secure our due restoration to a right mind and right relations.—R. T.

Vers. 9-13.—*An appalling offer and a wise choice.* The details may be given as explained in the Expository portion of this Commentary. Famine, war, and plague are the three ordinary Divine agencies used for the judgment of nations. Each affects numbers and arouses *national feeling*. Very seldom, indeed, does God make men the offer of a choice of punishments; and we can fully understand that it would not be consistent with his honour so to do. Then why did he do it in this particular case? Because this was special, and designed to bear mainly on the recovery of a good man's full trust in God. God cannot usually make offers to men, because there is no good and right feeling in them to which his offer may appeal. God could make such offer to David, because his was only a temporary aberration and failure from the true spirit and full

loyalty. Even in the matter of his own judgment, God may take David, the "man after his own heart," into his counsel.

I. THE POINT OF THE THREEFOLD OFFER. It tested David's trust in God. Would he prefer judgment which came very evidently *through human agency*, or would he prefer judgment which was plainly sent direct from God? We know that pestilence is as truly due to human neglect and error as is famine or war; but, in the sentiment of David's time, plague was the *direct visitation* of God.

II. THE POINT OF DAVID'S CHOICE. (Ver. 13.) 1. He felt that he could better trust the direct Divine agency than man's ministry, which might be toned with ill feeling. 2. There was more hope of the limitations and qualifications of *mercy* in God's dealings than in man's. 3. The national honour and the integrity of the kingdom and the stability of the throne would not be so seriously affected by a plague, as they would be by the temporary triumph of the national foes.

When we are, with David, fully willing to fall into God's hands, then the Divine judgments may be graciously *tempered*, and even removed.—R. T.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The necessary connection between sin and judgment.* Prove and illustrate the universality of the connection. Illustrations may be found in every age and every sphere. See the idea of a Nemesis; and show that pointing out this connection is the commonplacere of the moral and religious teacher.

I. SEE CLEARLY WHAT SIN IS. Give the theories about sin; but apart from theory, or doctrine, endeavour to understand what sin is (1) *in itself*; (2) in its *power of growth*; (3) in its *subtile and mischievous influences*; (4) in its *interference with the Divine order*; (5) in its *relations with the Divine Law*; (6) in the *sight of God*, as intimated in the Scriptures. When a suitable impression is gained of what sin is, we are prepared to—

II. SEE WHY IT MUST BE MET WITH JUDGMENTS. Because (1) it *beclouds man's conscience*, and judgment alone removes such clouds; (2) it *subverts Divine authority*, and such authority judgments alone can vindicate; (3) it *interferes with the Divine plans and purposes*, and these judgments alone can rectify. The importance of the relation between sin and suffering, transgression and judgment, is best shown by the effort to realize what would now be the moral sentiments of men if this connection had not been assured, and men could now plead that any one of their number had ever sinned with impunity. So essential, indeed, is the connection, that when God grants forgiveness of the sin he seldom, if ever, interferes with the external consequences of the wrong. They are left to work on their severe but beneficent mission. Judgment, in both the small and the large spheres, is the minister, the angel, of the Divine mercy; and we may bless God for his judgments. Note also that Christ, as man, came, for man, under Divine judgments, because he was the Representative of sinners.—R. T.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The sight of the destroying angel.* It is noted in these verses that the Divine judgment was executed by an angel, and that God and David both watched him carrying out his fearful commission. The sight produced different effects on the watchers, and these suggest useful thoughts and truths. The Bible idea of an angel seems to be that of an agent, other than man, employed to carry out the Divine purposes in the sphere of creation, and especially in this our world. If we accept this comprehensive conception of an angel, we shall understand how there may be angels of affliction, angels of death, and even angels of temptation, all engaged directly in the Divine service. There may be God's angel of pestilence for the punishment of David, and God's angel of temptation, or testing, for the purifying of Job. It may be shown that destruction by pestilence is on several occasions attributed to the ministry of an angel: e.g. destruction of the firstborn in Egypt and of Sennacherib's army. This is still a familiar poetical figure. Sometimes unseen things have been graciously set within the sphere of the senses, in order to help men to feel the reality of the unseen. Angels are unseen beings; the Divine workings are largely secret and unseen; but it pleases God to set his people sometimes "within the veil"; or, we may say, "behind the scenes;" or down below among the machinery, so that they may gain for themselves, and give to others, fitting impressions of the reality of the Divine working. For a similar reason God, the infinite and spiritual Being, is spoken of under human figures,

as though he were a man, doing a man's deeds and feeling a man's feelings. Some explanation of anthropomorphism and anthropopathism may here suitably be given. In the verses now for consideration, we find a *double vision* and a *double repentance*. God saw the angel and repented, so did David.

I. A DOUBLE VISION—**GOD'S AND MAN'S.** It is precisely noticed that as the angel was engaged in his work of destruction, “the Lord beheld.” Here is set before us something more than God's perfect knowledge of everything that happens. It impresses upon us his personal interest in his administration of human affairs; his immediate attention to the execution of the judgments he denounces; and his sensitiveness to the effects of his judgments on those who suffer them. So it convinces us of what we may call the *paternity* of God. We also gain the assurance that suffering, when it comes as *penalty*, can never get beyond God's inspection and control. This conviction makes us willing, as David was, to “fall into the hands of God.” Compare our Lord, in his extreme suffering, commanding himself to the “hands of the Father.” Further, it reveals to us the fact that God brings his pitying mercies into our **very calamities**. David also saw the angel, and by the sight was enabled distinctly to recognize the Divine agency in what otherwise he might have called a calamity.

II. A DOUBLE REPENTANCE. Give explanations of the Old Testament and New Testament uses of the term. Distinguish *metanoia* from *metameleia*. Begin with general idea of repentance as *change of mind*; reconsideration with a view to a new course of conduct. Show in what senses the term can be applied to God, and not to man; to man, and not to God. Especially show that in God's changes of action, or relation, there is adaptation to new conditions, without any *regret*, *conviction of mistake*, or *sense of wrong*. In the case before us God *repents*, in the sense of recognizing a sufficient fulfilment of his purpose in the judgment, and so the possibility of relieving Israel of the plague. David repents in a wholly different sense. He is aroused to full conviction of his sin, and humbles himself before God in solemn confessions. David now sees the connection between suffering and sin; the relation of one man's sin to many men's sufferings; and above all, the exceeding sinfulness of *his own sin*.—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*Conviction of personal sin.* For the particular character of David's sin reference may be made to the sketch given on ver. 2. And for the kind of conviction which David cherished when acts of sin were brought home to him, illustration may be taken from Ps. li. His sin might have been the sin of David the *man*; as was his sin in the matter of Bathsheba. Or it might have been the sin of David the *king*; and so God regarded it, adjusting his judgments accordingly. When convicted, it is a point of exceeding nobility in David that he seeks to bring the whole responsibility upon himself, asking God to treat the sin as that of the *man*, not of the *king*. We may fix attention upon this point. In this instance David stood for and acted for the nation, without the nation's consent. It is a most solemn thing for parents, masters, magistrates, etc., that they cannot always separate the official character from their acts; and they are responsible for the well-being of the children, the servants, or the citizens, whom they represent. Placed in such relations, men may act in ways that do not carry the feeling or wish of those for whom they stand; and so they may be the means of bringing upon them undeserved Divine judgments. The case of Jonah may be compared. The sailors' lives were imperilled by his act, though in it they had taken no share.

I. **MAN MAY BE OFFICIALLY**—or even by his temporary relations—**THE CAUSE OF THE INNOCENT SUFFERING.**

II. **SUCH CASES MUST ALWAYS BE REGARDED AS EXCEEDINGLY PERPLEXING AND PAINFUL.** See Asaph's psalms, and the discussions in the Book of Job.

III. **THE RIGHT-HEARTED MAN WILL EARNESTLY SEEK TO HAVE THE SUFFERING LIMITED TO HIMSELF**, and to this end will be ready fully to acknowledge his personal guilt.

Impress that our *relationships* give the overwhelmingly painful character to our sins.—R. T.

Ver. 24.—*Right feeling concerning giving to God.* David apprehended that the value of a gift greatly depends on the *self-denial* for which it finds expression. Compare the very interesting scene of Abraham negotiating with the sons of Heth for the purchase

of the field and cave of Machpelah. There, considerations of personal dignity prevented his taking the property ; and he felt that he could not lay his beloved partner down, save in a place which was his by purchase. Here, in the case of David, the feeling is a different one, yet it is in full harmony with the sentiment of the elder patriarch ; right religious feeling, the sense of what was due to God, prevented David from offering what was not really his by right of purchase. Personal dignity, and sensitiveness to what is befitting, both in social intercourse and in matters of religion, have their appropriate place ; and their due cultivation is a part of Christian duty. Some account of the symbolical significance of the burnt offering may fitly explain why David chose this form of sacrifice as appropriate to this occasion. Its central and characteristic meaning may be thus expressed in the words of Ewald : “In this, man’s share in the consumption of the offering altogether vanished. The sacrificer consecrated to the Deity alone the enjoyment of the whole, and this not to punish himself, or because he was punished, on account of a special consciousness of guilt by deprivation of sensuous participation, but rather from *free resolve and purest self-denial*.” Kurtz says, “The burning by fire was the chief point in this class of offering, and marked it as an expression of perpetual obligation to complete, sanctified, self-surrender to Jehovah.” The sacrifice was a solemn declaration that the offerer belonged wholly to God, and that he dedicated himself, soul and body, to him, and placed his life at his disposal. We treat David’s burnt offering as a typical religious service, and consider—

I. **THAT THE VALUE OF ALL RELIGIOUS SERVICE LIES IN THE SPIRIT OF HIM WHO RENDERS IT.** A burnt offering is in itself a valueless and unacceptable thing ; and so is every act of formal worship. Therefore in the unspiritual days of later Judaism, the prophets, as Isaiah, went so far as to say that God “hated” the mere formalities of religion, and found them a “weariness” to him. All a man’s gifts and acts must, like his words, carry a feeling, and express a desire and purpose. A man must utter himself in his words, or his words will be worthless. And so a man must utter himself in his offerings, sacrifices, and services, or God will say he “cannot away with them.” This point may be searchingly applied to our spiritual fitness for present-day services. Still it is true that *our feeling* must be the life of our worship.

II. **THE BEST THING WE CAN EXPRESS TO GOD IS OUR SELF-DEVOTEMENT.** This is the main idea of the burnt offering. This is the proper feeling cherished by David, and expressed in his sacrifice. It may be shown as the ultimate and comprehensive demand of St. Paul, in Rom. xii. 1, “I beseech you . . . that ye present your bodies a *living sacrifice*.”

III. **SUCH SELF-DEVOTEMENT CAN BE BEST EXPRESSED BY SELF-DENIAL.** This David felt, and it led him to refuse to offer to God some one else’s self-denial. He would have it to be his own sacrifice, the act of his own self-denial. Show that what is given to God should be a *man’s own*, and all the better if it is a man’s own by conscious effort, and if to set it aside for God involves some severe self-mastery. Such self-denials carry into expression the *soul-feeling* which alone is acceptable to God.

This subject lends itself to careful applications connected with modern religious worship and duty. It would be the dawn of a glorious day for the Church if every man felt as David did that he must utter his soul to God in gifts and offerings, and that these must come out of his “own proper good,” and carry a noble burden of self-denials.—R. T.

Ver. 26.—***Propitiation.*** On a subject of so much complexity, it is hardly fitting to raise a full discussion from a merely incidental illustration, especially in view of the fact that this incident is in harmony with the Old Testament conceptions of propitiation, and fuller and clear doctrinal light has since come in the teachings of the apostles. Here we note that David offered himself to God by a sacrifice, as a man convicted, penitent, and recovered to a right mind, and cherishing a spirit of full consecration. This offering God was pleased to accept by a symbol of fire, and to make a ground on which he could be propitiated. With the distinct understanding that we do but touch one side or aspect of a profound and mysterious subject, and that to deal with a part fully recognizes the importance of the *other parts* which go to make up the whole, we suggest the consideration of the following points :—

I. JUDGMENT IS THE DIVINE RECOGNITION OF A MAN'S WRONG STATE. Carefully distinguish between a man's wrong *state* of mind and will, and a wrong *act*. Both must be evil in the sight of God, but he must consider the wrong *state* as more serious than the wrong *act*. Judgment, coming as it must in the human and earthly spheres, will always *seem* to us to be the recognition of wrong *acts*; but when we come to see the deeper truth, we find it is Divine revelation of man's *state*, and due punishment of it. This David found out. The plague seemed to be judgment on his wrong *act*, in ordering the "census." When he came to his right mind, he found that it was Divine recognition of the *wilfulness* and *self-glorying* out of which the foolish command to take the census had come. Show that precisely the convictions which God's judgments aim to produce are convictions of inner wrong, heart-evil, sin of will.

II. PROPITIATION IS THE OFFERING TO GOD OF A MAN'S STATE RECOVERED TO RIGHT. This is the essence, but, as may be seen in David's example, it may properly find outward expression in fitting acts. And this view helps us most materially in our apprehension of the propitiation made by the Lord Jesus Christ. In the light of his spotlessness and sinless obedience, we can see that, standing for man, as man's Representative and Head, he presented to God *man recovered to right*.

III. UPON THE RECOGNITION OF MAN'S RIGHT STATE, JUDGMENT CAN BE REMOVED AND THE SENSE OF ACCEPTANCE GRANTED. Because the end of judgment is evidently reached (for we can only conceive of Divine judgments as revelational and corrective) and mercy may have its free, unhindered path. And it therefore appears that all the humiliations and all the persuasions of the gospel have this for their supreme aim, to bring us men into a right state so that we may *actually be* represented by the infinitely acceptable Son of God and Son of man. For what Christ pledges on our behalf we are bound actually to be. But this further truth needs to be here stated, that Christ is now working in us, by his Spirit, that right state of mind and heart which he has, in his great sacrifice, pledged us to win.—R. T.

Ver. 28.—*Answer to prayer consecrating the place of prayer.* It is noted that David felt the threshing-floor to have become a sacred place, precisely because *there* he had gained the answer to his prayer. A similar feeling is illustrated in the case of the patriarchs. Abraham erected his altars where the signs of the Divine favour came to him; and Jacob raised his pillow-stone as a pillar, and consecrated his place of vision, Bethel, the house of God. We may recognize instances of the same kind in our own religious experiences. Certain places are, to our feeling, peculiarly sacred, and we know that they have gained their sacredness out of prayer-times, wrestling scenes, and gracious Divine responses. It appears that David had received answer to his prayer under two symbols. (1) By the descending of heavenly fire for the consuming of his sacrifice, and (2) by the sign of the angel reverently and obediently putting the great plague-sword back into its scabbard (vers. 26, 27). These outward signs did but assure the fact of God's gracious answer, and should not be thought of as necessary to the answer, or we may find difficulty in realizing that nowadays God answers our prayers, and gives us of the answer an *inward witness* and not an *outward sign*.

I. THE FREEDOM OF SPIRITUAL WORSHIP FROM ALL LIMITATIONS OF PLACE. Every place is holy ground. God's temple-dome is the "arch of yon unmeasured sky;" God's temple-area is the floor of the whole earth. This point may be illustrated from the large variety of places which the holy men of Scripture made prayer-places: e.g. the inside of an ark, a cave in a mountain, the belly of a fish, etc. Or from the striking language of the Prophet Isaiah (lxvi. 1): "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" Or from the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, in John iv. 21-23: "The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father . . . The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." This point being well established and efficiently illustrated, there may be shown—

II. THE HELPFULNESS THAT MAY LIE IN LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS OF WORSHIP. There is a right and reasonable attachment to particular churches, places, and ordinances. Buildings and rooms gain a sacredness by their devotion to prayer and religious uses. And this feeling is to be encouraged, though we need to be reminded how easily it may

become mere sentiment and superstition. The house of God where our fathers worshipped should be sacred to us. The sanctuary where the truth of God's saving love first came home to our hearts must seem sacred to us. And it should be easier to win reverence, worship, and power of prayer in such consecrated places.

III. THIS APPLIES TO A MAN'S PERSONAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES IN HIS PRIVATE RELIGIOUS LIFE. Illustrate from such instances as may be typified by an instance in the life of Luther. That spot in the forest where Alexis was struck down by the lightning, and he himself spared, must have been ever after a sacred spot to him. Or take a case of prayer under some particular pressure, as when a beloved one, in sickness, seemed to be passing away. The place where prayer was offered and answered seems never to lose the hallowing associations. Our lives, indeed, ought to be full of consecrated spots, where we have raised, again and again, our pillars, inscribing thereon our *Ebenezer*, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

Impress that if our religion is to be, in any real and vigorous sense, personal, we must have made our own *sacred place*. The sanctuaries set apart for worship are most precious and most helpful, and the true hearts in all the ages have said, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house." But more is needed. Each man wants a temple of his own, raised in response to Divine goodness personally apprehended—a sacred place where, with the fullest emotion, he may offer his sacrifice of love and praise, even as David did.—R. T.

Vers. 29, 30.—*The relics left on feeling from the humbling scenes of life.* "Some have supposed that the terror which David had felt at the sight of the destroying angel (ver. 16) produced a bodily infirmity which made it physically impossible for him to go to Gibeon; but probably no more than a moral impediment is meant. David, knowing that by sacrifice on this altar he had caused the angel to stay his hand, was afraid to transfer his offerings elsewhere, lest the angel should resume his task, and pestilence again break out." David seemed ever after to see that sword before the tabernacle. It may be said that all Divine dealings have an immediate, and also a remote and permanent design. We are often dwelling on the immediate lessons that are impressed, but probably the best lessons are those which are learned by-and-by, after a while, when the excitement of the incidents has passed, and the whole is taken into quiet and serious review. Things seem so different when they are calmly looked back upon; aspects and relations come into view which we had not previously suspected. We know how true this is of our review of the lives of those whom we have known and loved; but it is equally true of the events and incidents of our own lives.

I. A MAN'S SINS AND FAILINGS LEAVE THEIR TRACES ON CHARACTER AND FEELING. Even when they are forgiven, and a man is fully recovered from their influence, he cannot be rid of them altogether. There is a new reverence, or a fear of self, or a perilous openness to particular temptation, or a strange shyness left behind, of which the man will never be rid. Illustrative cases from Scripture and modern life may be given. A good Scripture instance, in which there was a humbling experience, but one free from the bitterness of personal sin, is that of King Hezekiah (see Isa. xxxviii. 15, "I shall go softly all my [spared] years in the bitterness of my soul").

II. SUCH CONTINUED FEELING INSENSIBLY GUIDES FUTURE CONDUCT. This is seen in the case of David. Perhaps he hardly admitted to himself what it really was that kept him from going to inquire of God at Gibeon. And so we find in our fellow-men and in ourselves singular hesitations; we feel difficulties and shrink back, when there seems no real occasion. We cannot tell others, we hardly like to admit to ourselves, that it is the relic of some great stumble, or even fall and sin and shame; the very real ghost of our former ill. Compare the man who, late in life, said, remembering his riotous youth-time, "I would give my right arm if I could be quit of the evils left in thought from my youthful sins."

III. SUCH CONTINUED FEELING INDICATES A CONTINUED SANCTIFYING WORK. For God graciously uses, not merely things themselves, but their *after-effects*. No influence has its bare limits. The after-effects may differ greatly in different dispositions, but some of God's best work in our hearts and lives is done by means of them. This may be illustrated by the after-influence exerted on the Apostle St. Peter by his sad and shameful fall. And David expresses this continuous sanctifying influence of remembered

humblings when he says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now will I keep thy Word."

Apply especially to that great work of sanctifying, the producing of the humility of the true dependence. Show that it is most perfectly wrought in the fallen and forgiven, who ever live in the solemn shadow of the great experience.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXII.

From the commencement of this chapter to the close of the First Book of the Chronicles we again travel alone, and, with the exception of parallel passages of a merely ordinary character, have no longer the assistance of comparing different descriptions of the same stretches of history. The present chapter relates David's interested and zealous preparations for the building of the temple (vers. 1-5); his exhortations and solemn charge to his son and successor (vers. 6-16); and afterwards his injunctions to the "princes of Israel" (vers. 17-19) to help Solomon.

Ver. 1.—This verse evidently belongs to the close of the last chapter, and should have had its place there. It indicates a deep sense of relief that now visited David's mind. We can imagine how he had pondered often and long the "place where" of the "exceeding magnificent" house which it was in his heart to build for the Lord. The *place* was now found, and the more unexpected and "dreadful" (Gen. xxviii. 17) the method by which it was arrived at, the more convincing and satisfactory, at all events in some points of view. The extraordinary and impressive designating of this spot was in itself a signal for an active commencement of the work, and made at the same time such commencement practicable. Solomon and many others would afterwards often think, often speak, of the "threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite" as the place "which was shown to David his father," and which "David had prepared" (2 Chron. iii. 1). Here, then, he builds "the altar of burnt offering," as, on the neighbouring "hill of Zion," he had reared the "tabernacle for the ark."

Ver. 2.—The *strangers*. These are plainly called in the Septuagint "proselytes" (*τοὺς προσηλύτους*). They were, of course, foreign workmen, who came in pursuit of their trade. The injunctions as to "strangers," and with regard to showing them kindness, are very numerous, beginning with Exod. xii. 19, 48, 49; xxii. 21 (20); xxiii. 9; Lev. xix. 10, 33, 34; xv. 14-16; Deut. x. 18, 19; Josh. viii. 33-35.

It was not David's object merely to gain cheap or compulsory work (2 Chron. ii. 17, 18), but to obtain a skill, which immigrants from certain places would possess, in excess of that of his own people (2 Chron. ii. 7, 8, 13, 14), especially considering the absorption of Israel in the pursuit of war, which had so largely impeded their study and practice of these the arts of peace.

Ver. 3.—Iron . . . the *joinings*; and brass. The very first Bible mention of metals (Gen. iv. 22) places these two together. Whence Solomon got his "abundance" of the latter we have read in ch. xviii. 8; for the "abundance" of the former he would not necessarily go further than his own land. Although the expression, "the land whose stones are iron" (Deut. viii. 9) is possibly enough a poetical figure where it stands, yet some of the force of the figure may have sprung from its nearness to *fact*. The abundant use of iron in a great variety of tools, implements, weapons, and the knowledge of it in bar and sheet, might be illustrated from a large number of quotations from Scripture (Deut. xix. 5; xxvii. 5; 2 Sam. xii. 31; 2 Kings vi. 5; Isa. x. 34; Amos i. 3; and many others). The "joinings" were the clamps and plates of various size and shape, which held strongly together, whether beams of wood or blocks of stone.

Ver. 4.—The *Zidonians* and they of *Tyre* (see 1 Kings v. 6, 9, 13-18; 2 Chron. ii. 16-18). The interesting passages in Homer, Herodotus, and Strabo, which speak of Zidon, etc., are in entire accord with what is here said, and are well worth perusal; e.g. 'Iliad,' vi. 289-295, "And she descended to the vaulted chamber, where were the garments all embroidered, the works of women of Sidon, whom the godlike Alexander himself brought from Sidon when he crossed the wide sea, by the way that he brought Helen of noble lineage;" 'Iliad,' xxiii. 743, 744, "And this vessel was of unsurpassed fame for beauty over all the land, for the men of Sidon, cunning artificers, had skilfully wrought it, and Phoenicians had brought it over the dark sea;" 'Odyssey,' iv. 615-618, "And it was all silver, but the borders were mingled with gold. It was the work of Hephaestus. The illustrious Phœdemus, King of the

Sidonians, gave it me when his palace sheltered me on my return thither;" "Odyssey," xv. 424, "I boast to come from Sidon, famed for its skill in the working of brass." Similar references may be found in Herodotus (vii. 44, 96) and Strabo (xvi. 2, § 23. See also "Speaker's Commentary," under 1 Kings v. 6).

Ver. 5.—Solomon . . . is young and tender. It is impossible to fix the exact age of Solomon as marked by these words. In a "fragment" of Eupolemus (see Cory's "Ancient Fragments of the Phoenician, etc., Writers," edit. London, 1832) he is put down at twelve years of age. Josephus ("Ant. Jud." viii. 7, § 8) as vaguely supposes he was fourteen at the time that he took the throne. He was the second son of Bathsheba, and can scarcely have exceeded the last-mentioned age by more than three or four years (yet comp. 1 Kings ii. 2; iii. 1, 7). This same language, "young and tender," is repeated in ch. xxix. 1. The reign of Solomon lasted forty years (1 Kings xi. 42; 2 Chron. ix. 30). He is called *old* (1 Kings xi. 4) when his strange wives "turned away his heart after other gods." We are not told his age at the time of his death. There are, in fact, no sufficient data for fixing to the year, or indeed within the liberal margin of several years, the age now designated as *young and tender*.

Ver. 7.—(Comp. ch. xvii. 1, 2; 2 Sam. vii. 2, 3.) For my son, the Chethiv shows "his son," the Keri substituting "my."

Ver. 8.—Because thou hast shed much blood. This is repeated very distinctly below (ch. xxviii. 3), and appears there again as acknowledged by the lip of David himself. It seems remarkable that no previous statement of this objection, nor even allusion to it, is found. Further, there seems no very opportune place for it in either our ch. xvii. 1—15 or in 2 Sam. vii. 1—17. Yet, if it seem impossible to resist the impression that it must have found expression on the occasion referred to in those two passages, we may fit it in best between vers. 10 and 11 of the former reference, and between vers. 11 and 12 of the latter. So far, however, as our Hebrew text goes, this is the first place in which the statement is made.

Ver. 9.—Shall be born. This is not the necessary translation of the verb. The form *בָּיַם* does not express here future time. Solomon was already born when the word of the Lord came to David. On the other hand, we may suppose special emphasis to belong to the clause, *His name shall be Solomon*. The name designates the man of *peace*, and the clause is an announcement, probably intended to throw further into the shade the alternative name *Jedidiah*, which

also had been divinely given (2 Sam. xii. 24, 25).

Ver. 10.—The substance of this verse is found also in Nathan's language (ch. xvii. 12, 13; 2 Sam. vii. 13, 14).

Ver. 12.—The father's prayer for the son, and in his hearing, will have often recurred to the memory of Solomon, and may have been the germ of the son's own prayer, which "pleased the Lord" (1 Kings iii. 5—14; 2 Chron. i. 7—12).

Ver. 13.—The references to olden time, and the pointed reference to Moses, must be regarded as emphatic. In ch. xxviii. 20 we find the additional words, "and do it," inserted after the animated and intensely earnest exhortation, *Be strong, and of good courage.* This inspiriting summons was no new one. It was probably already hallowed in the name of religious language, and would be often quoted (Deut. iv. 1; xxxi. 5—8; Josh. i. 5—9).

Ver. 14.—Now, behold, in my trouble. The Septuagint, Vulgate, and Luther's translation adopt here our marginal reading, "poverty." Keil, Bertheau, and others translate, with much greater probability, "by severe effort," which translation may be fortified, not only by such references as Gen. xxxi. 43 and Ps. cxxxii. 1 (where the same root is found in Pual infinitive), but by the expression evidently answering to the present one in ch. xxix. 2 (*רִיבְבָּזֶב*), "with all my strength." Moreover, David could not with correctness speak of poverty as characterizing his condition during the time that he had been collecting for the object of his heart's desire. And scarcely with any greater correctness could he speak of the necessary anxieties and responsibilities of his royal office as at all specially marking this period. A hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver. Our sense of dissatisfaction in being able neither heartily to accept nor conclusively to reject this statement of the quantities of gold and silver prepared by David, may be lessened in some degree by the statement found in ver. 16, that "of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, there is no number." Milman, in his "History of the Jews" (i. 266, 267, edit. 1830), says upon the general subject of this verse, "But enormous as this wealth (i.e. that of Solomon) appears, the statement of his expenditure on the temple, and of his annual revenue, so passes all credibility, that any attempt at forming a calculation, on the uncertain data we possess, may at once be abandoned as a hopeless task. No better proof can be given of the uncertainty of our authorities, of our imperfect knowledge of the Hebrew weights of money, and, above all, of our total ignorance of the

relative value which the precious metals bore to the commodities of life, than the estimate made by Dr. Prideaux of the treasures left by David, amounting to eight hundred millions, nearly the capital of our national debt." It must be noted, however, that Milman himself proceeds, when speaking of "the sources of the vast wealth which Solomon undoubtedly possessed," to bring very enormous sums (whether somewhat less or even somewhat more than the above estimate of Dr. Prideaux) more within the range of the possible, to our imagination. He justly remarks, for instance, that it is to be remembered that "the treasures of David were accumulated rather by conquest than traffic, that some of the nations he subdued, particularly the Edomites, were very wealthy. All the tribes seem to have worn a great deal of gold and silver, both in their ornaments and in their armour; their idols were often of gold; and the treasures of their temples, perhaps, contained considerable wealth. But during the reign of Solomon, *almost the whole commerce of the world* passed into his territories." After substantiating by details these and similar positions (pp. 267—271), he sums up, "It was from these various sources of wealth that the precious metals and all other valuable commodities were in such abundance that, in the figurative language of the sacred historian, 'silver was *in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar trees as sycamores.*'" Since the date of Milman's words just quoted, however, investigation of ancient weights and measures, and of those of Scripture, has made some advance, yet not sufficient to enable us to arrive at any certainty as to those of our present passage. Assuming that the text of our present verse is not corrupt, and that the figures which it gives are correct, the weight and the value of the gold and silver mentioned are very great, whatever the talent in question. This assumption, however, cannot be relied upon, and it seems scarcely legitimate to interpret the talent as any than the Hebrew talent, considering the silence observed as regards any other. It need not be said here that the exchanges of money value were estimated in these times by so much weight of gold or silver. Further, "the shekel of the sanctuary" (Exod. xxx. 13; Lev. xxvii. 3), possibly the same with "the shekel after the king's weight" (2 Sam. xvi. 26), and which was kept in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple—was presumably the standard. The gold talent was double the weight of the silver talent. It weighed 1,320,000 grains, instead of 660,000. The silver talent contained 50 manehs, of 60 shekels each; but the gold talent contained 100 manehs, of 100 shekels each. The modern money equi-

valents of these weights are very uncertain. Both the silver and the gold talent have been very variously calculated in this relation. Some of the best authorities put the silver talent at £312 3s. 9d., and the gold at £5475. This would make the money value described by this verse nearly nine hundred millions of our money. Other estimates are considerably in excess of this sum, and but few fall below it. Vast as the sum is, we may be helped in some degree to accept it by the statement of Pliny, who ("Nat. Hist.", xxxii. 15) tells us that Cyrus, in his subjugation of Asia, took half as many talents of silver as are here mentioned, and thirty-four thousand pounds of gold; see articles in Smith's "Bible Dictionary," on "Money," and on "Weights and Measures"). Among the most valuable works on these subjects are De Saulcy's "Numismatique Judique," and F. Madden's "Jewish Coinage."

Ver. 15.—So too ch. xxviii. 21; 2 Chron. ii. 7, 17, 18; as well as vers. 2—4 of the present chapter.

Ver. 16.—Arise . . . and be doing. The first and last words of Ezra x. 4 are found here, and note may be made of the similarity of the expression.

Vers. 17—19.—These verses contain David's command, accompanied by urgent argument, to the princes of Israel, to render their hearty assistance.

Ver. 17.—All the princes; i.e. those who held positions of authority as commanders, leaders, elders, heads of tribes, and chiefs of the fathers (ch. xxvii. 22; xxviii. 2; xxviii. 1).

Ver. 18.—The whole of this verse should have been suggestive of memories thrilling with interest. What David says here is equivalent to the declaration of the perfect fulfilment of the promises of nine hundred years ago. By faith of those very promises how many generations had lived! What journeyings, suspense, punishment, and struggle, the intervening centuries had witnessed! And now at last it is given to the lip of the aged David to pronounce the termination of a nation's prolonged conflict, its entrance into peace, and the fulfilment of the most impasioned wishes, imaginings, and prayers of the patriarchs, of Moses, and of a long line of the faithful. It was well for David that he could not foresee and did not know how near the culminating of a nation's glory and prosperity might be to its woeful fall and prolonged decay. The analogy that obtains in this respect between the history of an individual and of a nation is as remarkable as it should be instructive and turned to the uses of warning.

Ver. 19.—To bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God. To

settle these in a fixed home had now been of a long time the consuming desire of David's heart (so ch. xv. 1; 2 Chron. v. 2—4). Into the house that is to be built. The preposition *ל*, instead of *בָּ*, before "the house," is to be noticed here (ch. xxv. 26; Neh. x. 35). Also the Niphal participle,

מִבְּנָה, here translated "that is to be built," is to be noticed. The meaning of David would be better met probably thus: "Arise, build the sanctuary . . . to bring the ark . . . into the house (then) builded to the Name of the Lord."

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 8.—*Religious enthusiasm in old age—a model soliloquy.* This soliloquy exhibits the settled thought of years past. The house that is to be builded for the Lord, remaining still to old age, the imperial thought of David's heart. And we may notice that—

I. THE PURPOSE THAT IS HALLOWED IN OWNING FOR ITS CHIEF OBJECT THE WELFARE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD IS ONE THAT DOES THRIVE WELL EVEN TO OLD AGE. Other designs, projects, and purposes are, it is true, often seen to flourish to old age as matter of fact. But in innumerable instances how much better it had been if their fascination had been long before resisted, and their tyrannous demand on the force that so plainly threatens to ebb had been long since denied them! They unduly consume strength of mind and body. They inappropriately occupy the strength of the heart. They have really *nothing* in common with the momentous future that is so imminent. They often contrast painfully and repulsively with it. Far otherwise was it now with David's purpose, and with such as are in any analogy with it. In his faithful heart a holy purpose had been cherished. It still stands fast, and harmonizes well with age—with the thoughts appropriate to age, with the experience and correcter judgments of age, and with its near prospects.

II. THE PURPOSE THAT IS HALLOWED IN HAVING FOR ITS DISTINCT OBJECT THE WELFARE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OFFERS AMPLE ROOM FOR THE EXERCISE OF A NOBLE AMBITION. "The house . . . must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries." 1. An exalting force in human character finds exercise and abundant scope at a time when it might otherwise be on the decay, or, if not on the decay, able to find no really worthy object. 2. It finds exercise not merely healthful to the person who exhibits it, but of widespread usefulness. Beside personal aspiration after heaven, its beatific visions, its perfect holiness, there is distinctly an ambition which shall become a dying bed—the ambition to leave with the world what will be a continuing and growing blessing to it, and a lasting witness for God and his truth. In no way, other things being equal, is blessing so surely given as when *directly* given in connection with spiritual work, and with that grandest enterprise, the Church of God. Where all other grandeur of earth must fade therefore, and the eye has become passionless to all other, its brightest colours, the Church of God, as well material as spiritual, has been known to enter a successful competition with *whatever* else occupied a dying hour.

III. PURPOSES HALLOWED THROUGH THEIR CONNECTION WITH THE CHURCH OF GOD WILL NOT TOLERATE THE RISK OF THEIR GREAT OBJECTS BEING PREJUDICED BY ANY CAUSES AVOIDABLE. Even though natural relationship might have tempted the risk, and Divine designation might have been pressed into some warrant of it, David does not for a moment yield to it. He does promptly and with guarded zealous forethought, acknowledge to the danger, and do the best to provide against it. Religious principle *ought* to overcome hereditary instincts, and the ties of nature ought *not* to override those of diviner origin. "Whoso loveth father or mother more than me," said Jesus, "is not worthy of me." David was doubtless very proud of his son, very tender of him; but he was justly prouder of the work of his God, and justly tenderer of it and its secured welfare. Genuine holy purposes seem to own to a native circumspection. They seem to possess a secret safeguard within themselves. Of these it is not true, and it is not said, that the children of nature are in their generation wiser than they. The forethought, then, that works so largely in human life, and is so fruitful of various good, shows to great advantage in such conduct as that of David at this crisis. There

are, indeed, senses in which it may be said almost to *belong* to nature to consider and to act for following generations. For so "the husbandman plants many a tree, no berry of which he can reckon on living to behold." But it is the work of something more than nature, higher than nature, when holy purposes waken vigour, fire, enthusiasm, and zealous labour in old age. And strikingly are such purposes distinguished from those "good intentions" which have won for themselves a proverbial and a bad character.

Ver. 8.—*The stain of blood.* We distinctly read here, as also in the stricter parallel of this place (ch. xxviii. 3), that it was because David had "shed blood abundantly," had "shed much blood on the earth" in the sight of God, had "made great wars," that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Thou shalt not build an house to my Name." After the death of David we find Solomon—so far as we may go by his language—seeming to put a somewhat different shade of interpretation on the matter. He does not, indeed, say anything different from the truth, or necessarily inconsistent with it; but perhaps moved by a son's filial dutifulness, he purposes to omit those aspects which were the more painful aspects, and grievous to a son's lip to enlarge upon. He says (1 Kings v. 3), "Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the Name of the Lord his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet." This version is also quite consistent with the indications of our compiler (ch. xvii. 1), and with those of 2 Sam. vii. 1. With one fuller, however, and more plain-spoken, from the honest lip of the father himself to his son, not of the son to the outer world, we have here to do.

And we are taught—

I. THAT AS SURELY AS JUDGMENT IS GOD'S STRANGE WORK, SO SURELY WOULD HE THAT THAT WORST JUDGMENT, WAR, AND THE SHEDDING OF FELLOW-MAN'S BLOOD SHOULD BE THE STRANGE WORK OF HIS PEOPLE. If there be times when these be necessary, yet are they intrinsically "strange work," and are emphatically by the Divine will to be so regarded. The man who has been but the bare *instrument* of this kind of thing among his fellow-men on earth, shall *not* be the man whose hands shall be honoured to rear the temple of God, the Church of love and peace, and of the perfecter brotherhood of humanity.

II. THAT THE PREVAILING BENT OR HABIT, OR MERE OCCUPATION OF OUR PREVIOUS LIFE, WILL NOT UNFREQUENTLY AT SOME CRITICAL MOMENT, AND ONE WHICH WE MAY IMAGINE TO BE OF SUPREME IMPORT, DECIDE THE LOT THAT SHALL FALL TO US, OR BE FORFEITED FOR EVER. Sin may be forgiven, the tyranny of evil habit may be broken, the usurper of the heart's throne may be dethroned, circumstance may have been almost revolutionized; but in hard fact, the things that have been cannot be made as though they had not been, nor shall we be counted as though they had not been. Some stains are very stubborn things. And they are not superstitiously but legitimately regarded such. The stain of blood is notoriously of this description. Two such contrasts as Cain and David attest it. Contrasts violent as the savage sacrifices of heathendom through unnumbered ages and those of revelation illustrate it. But the tremendous demonstration itself may be held to come from the mark, the sprinkling, the efficacy of that blood of which they once cried out, let it "be on us and on our children." On these both the dreadful stain of it, and the infinite virtue of it, have been from time to time, and still are, and shall be. Yet how many important and solemn illustrations of the same principle there are which shall fall very far short of those that bloodshed offers, David's habit in this sort, nevertheless, our typical warning all the while! The element of doubtfulness in your profession, your business, your tactics, your line of well-known conduct awhile, may prove to lie just in this, the irresistible suspicion which they shall inevitably engender in the better part of human nature, in its higher instincts—in a word, in the humarer portion of humanity. That suspicion need be voted no freak of caprice, of superstition, of mock purity. It is a suspicion of the kind safe to incur itself. And it may be distinctly noted that it is incurred: 1. *By the unwelcome, unsavoury nature of the actual deeds asked or involved.* Though haply it be necessary that these be done, yet in good men's minds there shall be a veiled revulsion from the touch of the hand that is the minister of them. 2. *By the quality of character, which they are plainly calculated to beget or to foster.* One that may beget

disparagement of thought, of feeling, of human inalienable rights, which should be held ever sacred. 3. *By their resolute owing to the endowment of an unavoidable tenacity of life.* They have a name to live, though not an enviable name. They will make their name to be heard when their doer would heartily wish they had never lived at all. They insist on reappearing, and brighten out to vision at times the most inopportune.

III. THAT HE WHO NOW REFUSES THE NOBLER SERVICE OF DAVID, THOUGH ACCEPTING THE PURPOSE OF HIS HEART, IS HE SOME OF WHOSE MIGHTIEST TITLES SOUND OF BATTLE AND VICTORY. The force of the lessons suggested to us by this passage certainly suffer no loss when we note an inconsistency which justifies itself in the very speaking of it. Vengeance, retribution, ultimate punishment, human blood, human life, lie all specially within the one supreme jurisdiction. And though doubtless God devolves the execution of these into the hands of others, the right of them he does not devolve. For David, for kings, for statesmen, for every man, the danger is that he encroach a hair's breadth upon such a right. Now the Lord of hosts, the God of armies, the mighty Man of war, the Captain, the Avenger, the glorious Victor, is he alone to whom could safely attach the vast trust of human life and destiny, and the prerogative of the unquestioned disposition of them. It is he who, those titles of his own notwithstanding, pronounces the word that David shall not be the honoured builder of the temple, that olden type of the Church. Not because the object was not a good one, not because the purpose of David's heart was an impure or mingled one, but because it had fallen so often to David to pour on the ground the life-blood of his fellows which the Church comes to save, therefore was the prohibition peremptory. Nor is any respite of allowance granted to the indisputable fact, that many of David's wars had been under Divine sanction and by Divine command. Yet is there herein no mystery of Divine sovereignty to be pondered, no inscrutableness of "the things hidden" to be adored. For human feeling, human instinct, reason's convictions and calmest utterances justify and approve the verdict.

Vers. 11-13.—*The aged king's charge to his son and successor.* The language of David to his son here, and shortly afterwards to the princes of the kingdom, indicate well his recognition and lively memory of the fact that stone and wood, gold and iron, will need willing hands, earnest minds, devoted hearts, and that even the best material of doctrine and truth will lie dead without the energy of the will and the living Spirit. The present utterances of David's lips, though somewhat various, go together to make what may still be correctly called one charge. And this charge is formulated in words of—

I. DIRECT ADDRESS AND INCITEMENT. David uses the direct human means. He looks upon his son. He speaks as a father to his son. With these natural aids of human look and voice he appeals to him, and remembers that the memory of them may possess an influence of incalculable helpfulness at some critical moments in time to come. It is not sufficient that we think and pray over God's work and over others. We must *use* that word as a weapon, and *wield* it with all such force, both of kind and of degree, as may be open to us. So to preaching and teaching the best, the purest, and the most prepared of Divine truth, we must add the instrument of *appeal*. That appeal must be in God's name, and must consist of his truth, but it must still be our appeal, warm with the love and sympathy of the heart of a fellow-creature, and quivering with the anxious tones of a fellow-creature's voice. And in carrying out these methods, however undesignedly, David: 1. *Announces the opportunity that lies before his son.* He will not suffer any risk in the matter, but constrains his son to look at the opportunity, secures his surveying it in something of its proper dimensions. Solomon was very young still; but youth often *under-estimates* the dimensions of the things that are greatest of all. Just as the vast scenery that the eye looks on for the *first* time seems to have been over-described and exaggerated, till the truth grows on the eye day after day, and month after month, and that eye becomes educated to estimate magnitude more correctly. David, therefore, fixes attention, at all events, upon the grandeur of the opportunity which has now fallen to the lot of a very young man—"Build the house of the Lord thy God." 2. *Emphasizes the value of the suggestions arising from a father's experience.* David has not concealed from his young son what it had been in himself which had stood in the way of his accomplishing his own desire. It is not always to

be expected, nor always wise or right, that a father "make a clean breast of it" to a young son. But David has done this now, and adds advice, and the tones of an earnest deep feeling which failed not to betray itself. 3. *Urges the far more potent inducement of the Divine designation.* "Build the house of the Lord thy God, as he hath said of thee." If somewhat veiled, this is in effect the strong argument enwrapt in St. Paul's exhortation, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 12, 13). What a tremendous force has developed itself from the midst of all the weakness of human powers, when these have heard and surrendered themselves to the Divine *call!* Nothing so disarms as the consciousness that God and his truth are against you; and nothing fills the heart with such true fire and such abiding, growing determination as the happy contrary. 4. *Appeals to the principle of sanctified courage.* "Be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed." The strength, the courage, the fearlessness, not such as should have to be shown against any outer foe, but against the foe who must be feared from within. To fear responsibility rather than to dare it, is one thing; to run away from duty, from high endeavour, from difficult enterprise because of responsibility, is another thing, and an ignoble thing. Against temptation of this kind even a man's natural courage should largely defend him, much more should godly courage.

II. INDIRECT ADDRESS, AS OVERHEARD, FOR INSTANCE, IN THE SUGGESTIONS OF FERVENT PRAYER. Of all malevolent influences, one of the most disastrous is when the impression is produced upon one that he is "prayed against." Of all tendering, melting influences, one of the most effective has been observed to be when genuine prayer has been *overheard*; the person praying unconscious thereof, and the person prayed for convinced of the same. But in this case David wishes his young son to hear and know his prayer and deepest desires for him. And Solomon hears theréin: 1. *The prayer that speaks gentle, thoughtful affection.* "The Lord be with thee"—the unchanging, almighty, unerring Friend. This petition, too familiar to our ear, too little familiar to our thought, knows no limit of time, sets no bound to help, begs constant mercy, constant love. 2. *The prayer that suggests the memory of need*—the need of "wisdom and understanding." Amid high position, great power, immense wealth and glory, David will not have his son forget the need of that "wisdom and understanding" which were more precious than rubies, and above all price. Nor will he have him forget that from God alone are these to be derived. And the exceeding importance that David attaches to the possession of these is further indicated by the word "only." If only these are given by the Giver of all good, if only these are treasured by his son, all else may be trusted to go well. 3. *The prayer that honours obedience.* Solomon must "keep the Law of the Lord his God;" he must "take heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments with which the Lord charged Moses concerning Israel." His principle, his idea, his habit—none of these must look the way of doing his own will, ruling for his own ends or glory. He is but a vicegerent over God's people, and follows in this respect the greatest exemplars and models of his people from most ancient, most honoured times. God had so "charged" Moses concerning Israel, that Moses had for the most part been obedient and "faithful as a servant;" and David prays that a similarly gracious, condescending, and commanding "charge" may be vouchsafed to Solomon, and heard and "kept" by Solomon. 4. *The prayer that authoritatively pronounces the embryo blessing.* "Then shalt thou prosper." So this charge, both for its matter and for its manner, for its following the precedents of wise human means, and for its imploring the Divine blessing and unhesitatingly avowing the perpetual need of Divine interposition, was well adapted to produce a lasting impression on Solomon. What could the loving father and the dying king do more for his people, for his son, for his God?

Ver. 19.—*The aged king's parting injunctions to the princes of his kingdom.* There both seems to have been, and on many accounts it is likely that there was, much savouring of the despotic in the position of the kings of Israel, and this even in their best times. It was in part the purposed and just result of their Divine call to the office they were to hold. And the despotic *disposition* was often as inconspicuous as could be desired. The characteristic evils of the despotic temper did not push themselves into any prominence, did not even make themselves visible, so long as that king divinely designated remembered faithfully to hold himself at the sovereign disposal of

the King of kings. But when this was not the case, they developed rapidly and disastrously. It is nevertheless abundantly plain that, when the authority and voice of the *good* king sounded most absolute, the facts of human life and character were not disregarded. Full account was made of them, and the nature of human society was religiously respected. Hence, at the present time, David calls on the princes of the kingdom, as well as on his own son and successor. He calls on them to close up their ranks round him, and addresses them as though they were truly the responsible props of the throne. He intreats them to co-operate with Solomon as *sympathizing* fellow-labourers in a grand religious enterprise. Such association of subjects with ruler is necessary to bind together strongly and safely the framework of any community fit to be called sound. Disintegration inevitably sets in with the deceitful interstices often found between class and class, or between ruler and ruled. We may notice here how David—

I. SKETCHES THE ELEMENTS OF A NATION'S OPPORTUNITY. These elements in the present instance are found in: 1. The fact that *there is trustworthy ground for being sure that the Lord is on the side of his people*. He is with them, and if so, they may feel that they have One with them far greater than all they who are against them. Confidence in a good cause is a great moral help and support. The confidence that comes of knowing that in the last resort one has a strong friend, is often a great strength. But to have God on one's side is to have both these in one. It is to have all in one. He will not be found with a bad cause. And he brings unerring wisdom, perfect knowledge, and an omnipotent arm into the field. Nor is the consciousness of the presence and favourable regard of the Lord of less significance when not the works of war but those of peace are in question. Thought and works of skill and cunning invention, of beauty and of wisdom, memory and reason, and the highest attempts and successes of imagination, all lie open to his inspiration. "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job xxxii. 8). And an even special stress is repeatedly laid upon the effects of this condescending presence upon the intelligence and the humble works of man, as, for instance, in the matter of the preparation of the materials used in the construction of the tabernacle of the wilderness (Exod. xxxi. 1-6). And this may be called the central element in David's suggestions as to the opportunity now before his nation. 2. *The absence of external causes of anxiety and apprehension*. Worldly care is no doubt a part of the necessity, the discipline, the improving education of the present life. But the *distraction* of it often has hindered the noblest developments of the powers that lie in human nature. These noblest efforts need the "united heart," the undivided zeal; and if you are to soar aloft, yours must be an unbroken wing. A nation's life has times without number illustrated all this on a large scale. By severe effort the individual may occasionally triumph over distraction, but the mass are interested in and follow but one thing at a time. 3. *The sense of restfulness* now the portion of the people. Their own dwelling-place, home, the earthly Canaan, at all events,—these are now their portion. And the spontaneous suggestion of them is some grateful earnest tribute forthcoming to their Giver. Home is for rest; rest is for work. Security is not to produce the fruit of sluggishness, but to yield that kind of "quietness and confidence" that shall make into strong, calm, determined purpose.

II. MAKES A STRONG APPEAL TO THE LEADERS OF THE NATION TO USE TO THE FULL THE OPPORTUNITY. This appeal is twofold. 1. It asks the *enthusiasm, the devotion, the full affection of heart and soul*, in the first place. These must be "set to seek the Lord God." They must not be left to take their hopeful chance, or chance more or less hopeful; they must be charged to rise to their higher selves. "My soul, wait thou only upon God." Some men of God of old recognized very distinctly how it devolved upon them to take their own heart, to talk, reason with it, urge it, "stir up its good gift," and lay upon it its solemn responsibility, its high privilege. 2. It asks the *honesty of action*. Great affections will pine without the bracing effects of exercise and trial and strenuous enterprise. Innumerable great purposes have come to ruin; and the wreckage has been visible enough and mournful enough. But the inner invisible wreck that has come of purposes great and holy, which never saw the light, never dared the breath of criticism, nor the winds of opposition, has been a thousandfold mournful and fatal. So David specifies, if not details, yet the leading divisions of

practical duty now. "Arise . . . build the sanctuary . . . bring the ark of the covenant . . . and the holy vessels into the house," when "built to the Name of the Lord."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 5.—Preparation for the temple. A site having been secured for the house of the Lord, the next thing to be done was to make what preparations were possible in view of the great undertaking. David's forethought and liberality, as described in this passage, are deserving of our admiration. Not permitted to do the work himself, he was allowed to commence and carry forward preparations for the construction of the temple. The considerations which led to this course of action were—

I. THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF THE WORK TO BE EXECUTED. A house for the Lord, the Eternal, whom "the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain," a house which should be "exceeding magnifical," obviously needed vast and prolonged and costly preparation. Masonry, metals, cedar-wood, joinery,—all were made ready beforehand by the provident generosity of the king. Thus, when the time came to build, it was found that much was already prepared for the workmen's hands.

II. THE YOUTH AND INEXPERIENCE OF THE PRINCE WHO WAS TO CARRY OUT THE PROJECT. As this was David's own son, it was natural that a kind consideration of the difficulties of the enterprise committed to him should govern David's conduct. Great interest gathers round a young monarch, especially if he comes to the throne at a time when great things are expected of him, or when his position is encompassed with difficulties. Solomon was "young and tender," and it was natural and right that his experienced father should take measures to lighten the burden which Providence designed to fall upon the youthful and inexperienced.

III. HIS OWN INTEREST IN THE WORK. David would fain have undertaken the great enterprise himself. His mind conceived the purpose which his son was appointed to execute. He sacrificed self, and sank his personal ambition in the great project. Reverence and gratitude to the God to whom he owed so much induced him to acquiesce in the appointment of Divine wisdom, and to further the undertaking, if not in his own way, yet in God's.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION. 1. *The construction of the Lord's spiritual temple is a work in which it behoves all Christians to take a deep interest.* There groweth "an holy temple unto the Lord." In this temple Christ's people are not only living stones, they are active builders. They wrong themselves and their Saviour, if they are absorbed in their own petty plans and negligent of this great cause which should excite the attention and sympathy of all. 2. *Even though our part in this work be subordinate and unnoticeable, we should not slight the privilege granted us.* Our work may be underground work which no one sees, or preparatory work which no one values at its true worth. But if God has assigned it to us, let us count it an honour to work for him. 3. *In the service of God we may be fellow-helpers one of another.* As David and Solomon wrought in harmony, so should all the builders in the spiritual temple. Sympathy and co-operation distinguish the sanctified activities of the Lord's servants. 4. *Our time for work is short.* Death will soon call upon us to lay down the implements of toil. Let us therefore work while it is day, "for the night cometh when no man can work."—T.

Vers. 11-13.—Fatherly wishes and prayers. David was not satisfied to make material preparations for the erection of the temple at Jerusalem. He had something more valuable than metals and stone and timber to give his son, in view of the great work which it should devolve upon him to execute. He gave to Solomon his counsels and his prayers. In these verses David—

I. LAYS DOWN THE CONDITIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS OF SUCCESSFUL WORK FOR THE LORD. These are: 1. *Intellectual gifts*, "wisdom and understanding." If bodily strength is a gift from the Lord, much more is vigour and versatility of mind. A curse when employed in the service of self and sin, these endowments become a precious and unspeakable blessing when consecrated to the cause of God. 2. *A position of influence and authority.* Solomon had "charge concerning Israel." All who by birth, station,

position, or office have special influence over others have also special responsibilities. This is true, not only of political, but also of social and educational influence. 3. *Reverent regard to God's will.* Solomon's strength was in "keeping the Law of the Lord," in "taking heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the Lord charged Moses with concerning Israel." 4. *A fearless and courageous spirit.* This seems natural to some men; but in those naturally self-distrustful courage may be cultivated by an habitual reliance upon the grace and promises of God. 5. *Above all, the presence of the Lord.* If he be with his servants, his work shall prosper in their hands. Here David also—

II. EXPRESSES HIS HEART'S DESIRE AND PRAYER ON HIS SON'S BEHALF. We read David's heart in these utterances. Whilst his judgment as to the conditions of prosperity are laid down, how devoutly does he desire that success may crown Solomon's efforts, that the work of the Lord may be accomplished! It was natural to the King of Israel to shape his wishes into prayers; the wishes of so pious a man could be nothing less than prayers. His heart's desire for his son was this—*The Lord be with thee! give thee all qualifications and all help in his service!*

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. *Regard and seek all means of usefulness.* Especially should the young prize every means of serving their generation according to the will of God. Nothing is to be despised or rejected which can tend to bring about an end so desirable. 2. *In the acquisition and employment of all means of usefulness, neglect not those habits of prayer which will tend to make those means abundantly efficacious.*—T.

Ver. 16.—“*Be doing.*” When David had done all that lay in his power, he commended the rest to his son Solomon. The son was not to rest in indolence because the father had wrought with zeal and given with liberality. Nor, because assured of the approval and the help of Heaven, was he to remit diligence and devotion. This David clearly impressed upon him in addressing to Solomon the brief but stirring admonition of the text: “*Arise, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee.*” The summons may well be addressed to every Christian heart.

I. MAN'S NATURE IS ACTIVE. We are made, not only to think and to feel, but *to do*. The contemplative man, if his contemplations have no influence upon his life, is justly despised. “*In all labour there is profit.*” “*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.*”

II. THE DEMANDS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE ARE FOR ACTION. The world in which we find ourselves corresponds to the nature with which we are endowed. In every position of life there is a loud call for activity. Without exertion and labour no good can be accomplished.

III. THE SUMMONS OF TRUE RELIGION IS TO ACTIVITY. The sloth of men may sometimes misinterpret religion; may endeavour to persuade them that all they need is to believe the truth, and to feel deeply when religious truth is addressed to them. But the Scriptures give no countenance to such errors, but teach us to “*show our faith by our works,*” and so prove the sincerity of our love.

IV. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST IS AN EXAMPLE OF ACTIVITY. He both did the will of his Father and taught men to do likewise. This was his meat and drink; of this he never wearied. “*He wrought the works of him that sent him while it was day.*”

V. THE BLESSING OF GOD MAY BE EXPECTED TO REST UPON SANCTIFIED ACTIVITY. The Holy Spirit of God alike inspires, directs, and prospers the labours of his people.—T.

Ver. 18.—“*Rest on every side.*” David had a word of encouragement, not only for his son, but for the princes of the kingdom, Solomon would need their aid in achieving his great undertaking. The king pointed out to them that the peace and prosperity established by Divine Providence were an indication of his will that, relieved from foreign anxieties, they should devote themselves to the service of Jehovah at home, in their own land, their own capital. “*Hath he not given you rest on every side?*”

I. OBSERVE THE NATURE OF THE REST HERE SPOKEN OF. It is not rest from labour; that, except for temporary relaxation, is, for the most part, not desirable in this world, where so much has to be done for God and for man. It was rest from their enemies, rest from war, rest from hindrances, disturbances, harassments; from the aboriginal

inhabitants of the land, and from the heathen tribes and nations around. It is a blessing for any nation to be at peace.

II. CONSIDER THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS REST WAS SECURED. The reign of David had been, on the whole, one of strife and warfare. Such a condition of things was not desirable on its own account, for its own sake. The end of effort, counsel, even war itself, is the rest of peace.

III. CONSIDER THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH SUCH REST IS INTENDED. Not for sloth, luxury, and self-indulgence; but in order that the work of God may go forward unhindered, and with growing and conspicuous prosperity. It was a noble use to which the peaceful reign of Solomon was put—the erection of the temple unto the Lord. And whenever God in his providence grants a nation rest on every side, it is a probation of national faithfulness, to see whether the precious opportunity will be used aright for the development of national resources, for the advancement of education and social well-being, and for the furtherance of genuine and practical religion.—T.

Ver. 19.—“*Arise, and build.*” Before the old king died, he wished to see his successor’s work in train and order. Accordingly, both to Solomon and to the princes, David addressed stirring words of admonition. And as what he had most at heart was the erection of the temple, it was natural that he should lay the greatest stress upon this vast and glorious undertaking.

I. Note first, as here described, THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THE BUILDING. It was “the sanctuary of the Lord God;” it was to be built “to the Name of the Lord.” A Divine dwelling, a habitation for the Most High, a holy place. In all this an emblem of the temple of our Saviour’s body, and of that spiritual house which is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

II. Remark next, THE PURPOSE OF THE BUILDING. It was to contain “the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God.” That is to say, it was not only the locality of God’s manifested presence, but it was the scene of sacrifice and worship and the centre of the nation’s religion. This gave a practical and political significance to the erection of the sanctuary.

III. Instructive is the account given of THE DISPOSITION AND SPIRIT OF THE BUILDERS. The work was not to be done mechanically, or from a feeling of constraint. They were to “set their heart and their soul to seek the Lord their God.” That is, they were to undertake the work as one distinctively religious, and from a religious motive and with a religious aim.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. *Let everything that is God’s engage your sympathy and interest and zeal.* Let each Christian hear the voice from heaven saying to him, “Arise, and build.” 2. *Let God’s work be done in a devout and religious spirit.* In serving the Lord seek him, and he will be found of you.—T.

Vers. 6-16.—*Successful service.* David’s charge to his son Solomon will furnish us with the conditions of all successful work done in the Name of Christ and for the extension of his kingdom. We may remark, preliminarily, that our leisure time cannot be better spent than in Christian work. Solomon was to have time for internal administration. His father had defeated and subdued all the national enemies. In the midst of protracted “peace and quietness” (ver. 9) he would have an ample interval in which to build a house for the Lord. The time which the labour of others, or our own toil, has secured to us we spend most admirably when we give it to the direct service of the Divine Master. The conditions of successful work for him are—

I. SECURING DIVINE DIRECTION. “Only the Lord give thee wisdom and understanding” (ver. 12). David clearly felt, as this “only” indicates, that everything would utterly fail if God did not grant his Divine succour. That failing, everything must prove to be a failure.

II. ENSURING PERSONAL FITNESS. (Vers. 7-9.) David was rendered personally unfit for the work by his much fighting. It was not fitting that a man of war should build the temple of the God of love. The two things did not go well together. It was far more becoming that Solomon, the “man of rest,” should execute this work. Our guilty past may have been pardoned, our occupation may not be absolutely wrong, our surroundings may not be censurable, our position may not be blameworthy, and yet

there may be something about one of these which makes it unsuitable for us and desirable for some one else to do the work which is required to be done.

III. MAINTAINING PERSONAL INTEGRITY. (Vers. 11—13.) “Prosper thou, and build the house . . . that thou mayest keep the Law of the Lord thy God. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed,” etc. God distinctly promised to be Solomon’s Father, and to establish his throne (ver. 10); but this prosperity must depend on loyalty and the keeping of the Law. Without the maintenance of our moral and spiritual integrity we cannot expect to be prospered in any work we do for God.

IV. MAKING ALL DUE PREPARATION. Solomon would have found himself overtired and unable to do as he did if David had not “in his trouble prepared for the house” (vers. 14—16). The aged king may be said to have laid the foundation of the building by all the pains he took to collect material and make everything ready for his son to begin the work. We never strike a better stroke in the service of God than when we are engaged in the work of preparation. Moses in Horeb, Paul in Arabia, the Master himself in the quiet home in Galilee and the still more quiet resting-place of the mountain-fold and the seaside of after days, we ourselves in the chamber of communion and at the study desk, are “working for God,” for we are doing that which is positively essential to true, abiding issues in the field of Christian labour.

V. ACTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REVEALED WILL OF CHRIST. “Build the house of the Lord, . . . as he hath said of thee” (ver. 11).

VI. CHERISHING THE CONFIDENCE WHICH IS CLOSELY ALLIED TO STRENGTH. “Be strong, and of good courage” (ver. 13). There is a confidence which is presumption, and which will be dishonoured; but there is a confidence which is in the truth and in God, and which is a large element of success. Where the diffident are defeated, the assured and courageous win. Let the Christian workman feel that behind him are Divine promises which “cannot be broken,” and he will advance boldly and strike successfully.

VII. MAKING THE WAY PLAIN FOR OUR SUCCESSORS. (Vers. 6—16.) Nothing is more hateful than the spirit of “après moi le déluge.” No worthy Christian workman will be content unless, like David, as he considers who and what are to come after him, he feels a devout thankfulness that he has made a plain path for his successors, in which they may walk in peace, honour, and usefulness. We may place by itself as a condition of success which is involved in some of the foregoing, but yet which deserves to be mentioned separately, *cultivating and exhibiting the spirit of devotion*. Thrice in this paternal counsel does David invoke the presence and blessing of Almighty God (vers. 11, 12, 16). It is in the spirit of conscious dependence on God and earnest uplooking to him for his Divine help (Ps. xxx. 10) that the workman of the Lord will render successful service to his Master and mankind.—C.

Vers. 17—19.—*The wisdom of the strong.* We may take the “princes of Israel” as types and representatives of the strong men, the leaders in the kingdom, or Church, or society of which they are members, those who are responsible for the measures which are adopted, for the course which is chosen, for the principles which are professed. Thus regarding them, we may gather from the text—

I. THAT IT IS THE WISDOM OF THE STRONG TO GAIN THE FAVOUR OF GOD for themselves and for the community. “Set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God” (ver. 19); i.e. strenuously and perseveringly endeavour to gain God’s approval, to do his will and win his smile. That is the “beginning of wisdom” and the end of it, in all cases now, with all leaders everywhere. They are to do this by (1) taking earnest heed to his revelation of himself; (2) accepting him who is the Manifestation of his mind and will; (3) fashioning their own lives and directing those of others according to his holy Word.

II. THAT THE WISDOM OF THE STRONG IS IN MAKING THE MOST OF FAVOURABLE OPPORTUNITY. David urged the princes to activity on the ground that the time had come for action. “Is not the Lord your God with you? and hath he not given you rest on every side?” etc. (ver. 18). Now that the energy of the people needed not to be devoted to the art of war, it was most fitting that it should be given to the building of a house for the Lord. The time of peace is the hour of national industry and progress, when the useful arts and religious institutions should receive particular attention. It is

the part of wise and conscientious leaders, in the Church as well as in the state, to watch for the time of opportunity, to make the utmost of the "golden hour," to strike when the blows will tell. Carefulness or negligence in this matter may make all the difference between success and failure. These are favourable times for (1) *reorganization*, (2) *reconciliation*, (3) *evangelization*.

III. THAT IT IS THE WISDOM OF THE STRONG TO BUILD UP THAT WHICH HOLDS THE MOST SACRED THINGS. "Build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God, into the house" (ver. 19). The princes could do nothing better for Israel than build the house in which the ark would abide; for the Lord himself would dwell above the mercy-seat, and so long as Israel worshipped purely in the house they were building they might count on his presence and his favour. Our leaders do well to incite us to build (1) *houses of the Lord* in which he himself will dwell, and receive the homage of his people and teach them his truth; (2) *institutions*—Churches, societies, families—in which the holy principles Christ has taught us shall be incorporated; (3) *national character*, which shall contain and embody those pure and righteous habits which are found in the life of the great Exemplar. These are of more value than all the "holy vessels" which David's zeal could collect.—C.

Vers. 1-5, 14.—*David's preparation for building the temple.* David was now in the last years of his reign, and these were spent in making preparation for the building of the temple. In order to procure the necessary workmen, he commanded to gather together the strangers in the land of Israel or the descendants of the Canaanites whom the Israelites had not destroyed when they took possession of the land, but had reduced to bondage. The number was so considerable that Solomon was able to employ one hundred and fifty thousand of them as labourers and stone-cutters. Of these David "set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God." Solomon was but a tender youth—not yet in his twentieth year—and the work to be executed was so great that David determined to make all the preparation he could himself. The materials prepared were many and costly. Iron, brass, and cedar trees; the two former without weight, for they were so abundant. But of gold there was one hundred thousand talents, and of silver one million talents. As the talent was one thousand shekels, and the shekel according to the Mosaic weight worth about two shillings and sixpence, the silver would thus amount to £375,000,000, and the gold to £450,000,000. This money seems to have been the fruit of the spoils of the wars in which David had been engaged. This enormous sum was at once laid out for the Lord's house. Thus all the accumulation of David's life is here consecrated to God. Thus should it be in the life of every true Christian. His money, his talents, his time, his opportunities, are all the Lord's and are to be consecrated to his service. "Ye are bought with a price." The Christian is in one sense the poorest man in the world, for all he has belongs to the Lord; yet he is the wealthiest, because God himself is his. We have no right to take a walk without it is the Lord's will, nor spend a penny unless as he would have us do it. When a man becomes the Lord's, everything he possessed passes over to him who has bought him. And he is but a steward of all he possesses, and soon to be called to give an account of his stewardship.—W.

Vers. 6-16.—*David's charge to Solomon.* This was a solemn charge delivered by David in view of his death. The shadow of death makes everything solemn. But while we hear the charge to Solomon, it is impossible not to perceive from David's words that "a greater than Solomon is here." The throne of Solomon was not established "for ever." It is a promise of God which, like many such promises in the Old Testament, look forward to the kingdom of the Messiah, in whom alone they receive their *literal* and perfect fulfilment. Let us listen to their perfect consummation: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i. 32, 33). Unless we notice the unexhausted promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, we shall read God's Word to little real profit, and it will be full of difficulties and perplexities. David connects in this charge two things which are inseparable—successful building and taking heed

to the Law of God. If a man is to build well he must be a man of God. All successful building is inseparable from a heart under the constant influence of Divine truth. "Arise therefore, and be doing," says David, "and the Lord be with thee." God can only be with us as our own hearts are abidingly under the power of his Word; and if he be *not* with us, how can we build? "Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." The secret of all true rising in life, of all progress and attainment, is for the heart to be under the influence and constant guidance of the Word. Life will, in the end, be "life's labour lost" without this.—W.

Vers. 17-19.—David's charge to the princes of Israel. After charging so solemnly his son, David turned to the princes of Israel, giving them an equally solemn charge to help his son Solomon in his great work. Every line of this charge to the princes is replete with spiritual instruction. The first line is a precious one: "Is not the Lord your God with you?" The presence of God is the Christian's great power for all work. "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." Moses knew its importance when he said, "If thy presence go not with us, lead us not up thence." The second line is equally precious: "Hath he not given you rest *on every side?*" The true Christian has indeed found "rest" in Christ the true David, and for the reason assigned here in David's third line—"for he hath given the inhabitants of the land [the Canaanites] into mine hand." Every enemy the child of God has is in the hand of Christ. Every sin he has committed, as well as the broken Law, and everything else that shut him out from God, have all been laid on Jesus. Everything that could injure or stand in the Christian's way, in the present or in the future, is all in the hand of Jesus. "Subdued" is the word written by Christ's cross on all his sins, on all his foes, on everything against him. Nay more: in all these things "he is more than conqueror through him that loved him." This being so, to what *end* is it all? David tells us: "Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God." Every affection, every desire, every energy, every aim, everything within us, is to be "*set*." And where? Christ-ward. On him who has done such great things for us. And does such grace tend to sloth or indifference? Far otherwise. "Arise therefore." Get up out of sloth, out of sin, out of earthliness of every kind. Get *higher*. "Nearer my God to thee, nearer to thee." And how is this rising to show itself? "Build ye the sanctuary." Let every thought and energy, every heart and every hand, be put to build up the *kingdom of God*—the true sanctuary of God in this world. And the last word in this charge is the climax—the great end to which everything points: "Build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God into the house that is to be built to the Name of the Lord." Observe the sanctuary was for this end—"to bring in the ark of the covenant and the holy vessels." So is it now. That ark is Christ. The "holy vessels" are everything that pertains to that ark. This is the great end of every building—to bring in Christ and everything that is of Christ. Is the sanctuary the believer's soul? Then let Christ and everything Christ-like be brought in there. Is the "sanctuary" a Church—any of the Churches of Christ or the entire Church—the body of Christ? Then see that the *ark* is brought in and its vessels—Christ and everything that will glorify him. The house was "to be built to the Name of the Lord." This *Name* is on the Christian, on every Christian Church, on every Christian duty, on every Christian nation, on every Christian work. See that the ark and its vessels are where the *name* is. See that we have *not* the *name* without the ark and its vessels. We may have the *name* in baptism, in the Holy Communion, in the Church and its ordinances, but the grand question is, "And the ark and its vessels there?"—W.

Ver. 2.—Alien help in God's service. David was willing to employ those who were not Israelites in the work of building the temple, and this is recorded as an indication of liberality and large-mindedness. By the "strangers" mentioned here we are to understand "aliens," the non-Israelite population of the land; and we have no ground for assuming that the persons he employed were necessarily proselytes. From 2 Chron. ii. 17 we learn that David took a census of these aliens, with the design of employing them in forced labours, as hewers of wood and stone, bearers of burdens, etc.

It does not appear that the Israelites, as a people, have ever displayed mechanical or constructive skill. Their bias has been towards agriculture and trade. It is often somewhat anxiously questioned whether sanctuary help—aid in church-building, and maintenance of Christian worship and work—can properly be received from worldly persons, who cannot be supposed to give themselves to God through their gifts in support of his service. Wider and nobler views of God's relations with men, and claims upon the service of all men, would make such questioning impossible. Exclusive feelings—caste sentiments—grow upon us only too easily; but they are always mischievous; they need to be carefully watched and repressed; and Christians, above all men, should cultivate the most liberal and generous sentiments. It should be their joy in God, that "the God of the *whole earth* must he be called." Keeping in mind that the object of this homily is to correct the "narrowness" which is too often the marked feature of pious sentiments, we consider—

I. **ALL SOULS ARE GOD'S.** "All souls are mine." George Macdonald well writes, "We are accustomed to say that we *are bodies*, and *have souls*, whereas we should rather say that we *are souls*, and *have bodies*." Paul pleads with the Gentile that we are all the "offspring of God." And our Lord, in his teaching on the mount, revealed God as providing for and overshadowing all, "making his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending his rain on the just and on the unjust." All souls are to come under the Divine judgment, and that judgment must be based on Divine dealings with men, and men's response thereto.

II. **ALL LIVES SHOULD BE CONSECRATED TO GOD.** By the claims of creation, relation, and providence, God urges upon every man the duty of surrender to him. See the familiar answer to the question, "What is the chief duty of man?" When Paul urges the Romans to "present their bodies a living sacrifice," he does but express the demand made by the God "in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways." If this be established as a universal principle, then these two things follow. 1. All man's *service* he claims. Whatever a man can do, God has the right to ask him to do *for him*. Illustrate by the sentiments of earlier times in regard to a king's right to claim the service of any member of his kingdom, day or night. God has the infinite right to make such claim; and the godly man fully recognizes it, and says—

"Take my body, spirit, soul;
Only thou possess the whole."

2. All man's *possessions* are for God's use as he may require them. Not merely what a man *is* he is for God, but what a man *has* he has for God. David fully recognized this, and in presenting to God the gathered material for the temple, he said, "Of thine own have we given thee." So when a worldly man gives of his property or time to God's service, we should feel that he is imperfectly and incompletely doing a part of the duty which rests on every man. Nothing of human service can be alien to God; and nothing should be alien to his people in working for him. We may encourage every man to do something, or give something to God, in the hope that, by-and-by, they may come to love God's service, and God himself.—R. T.

Vers. 2-5.—*Willingness to do what we may when we are forbidden to do what we would.* For reasons sufficiently defined, God did not allow David to build his temple; and David received the Divine refusal in a right spirit. It might have crushed him, and led him to feel that he could do nothing; but he nobly decided that if he might not actually build, he would gather the materials for building, and make all necessary preparations. Too often, when a man's particular plans are hindered, he throws up Christian work altogether. We therefore commend the really beautiful example of the pious David. A man should be cheerfully willing to do what he can when he cannot do what he would.

I. **THE PLACE FOR MAN'S WILL IN RELIGIOUS WORK.** He ought to purpose, devise, and plan great things, and expect that his enterprise and energy will serve the gracious Divine purpose. Man's will is not broken down by a true piety; it is rather quickened and renewed, though toned with submission to the Divine will.

II. **THE PLACE FOR THE DIVINE WILL IN RELIGIOUS WORK.** That *will* must be regarded as the final court of appeal, and reference must be made to it. The good

man's last word is, "If the Lord will, I shall live, and do this or that." Illustrate by the expression used in the Acts concerning Paul's travelling plans, "The Spirit suffered us not." We recognize the place of the Divine will in personal experience; we should also recognize its place in relation to Christian work. God does not always permit us to do what our hearts desire to do. The blocks in our way are Divine hindrances.

III. THE TRUE SUBMISSION IS ACTIVE OBEDIENCE WITHIN DIVINE LIMITS. Most unworthy is the sullen refusal to do nothing because we cannot have our own way. True humility finds expression in cheerfully doing what God will let us do.

Apply to Church life. God expresses his will often by putting disabilities in our way, but he at the same time opens up other ways for us. If we are willing to do what we may, we shall find it *fits in* for the outworking of God's perfect plan.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*Right ideas concerning God's earthly sanctuaries.* David's language in this verse is striking and suggestive, and it expresses a right feeling in relation to God's worship, and the places in which his worship is offered. He says, "The house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries." David did not desire a merely grand building, but rather one whose magnificence should be of such a character that it would draw universal attention to Jehovah and magnify his Name. "The temple was to have, as it were, a missionary character and office in proclaiming the Name of the Lord to all nations." The principles illustrated in this sentiment of David's may be thus dealt with.

L THE DUTY OF CONSERVING SPIRITUAL CONCEPTIONS OF GOD. "God is a Spirit: and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The unity and spirituality of God are foundation and essential truths of religion. How jealously they were regarded is indicated by the strong expressions of the two first commandments. We must as anxiously guard them from doctrines or sentiments that imperil them, as Israel must guard them from idolatrous customs. No earthly thing adequately represents God. No earthly figure or image properly fits him. And no earthly dwelling may be thought of as containing him. The omnipresence of Jehovah is beyond our power of apprehension; yet we may conceive of him as coming under no kind of human limitations. Material figures and forms of thought greatly help us, but none can know the Almighty to perfection. In our day of pronounced atheism, it is the more incumbent on us to witness fully concerning the immaterial and spiritual nature of God. Men may resist *our representations and descriptions* of God, and find these stumbling-blocks in the way of their conceiving God himself; and therefore we should ever cherish high, mystical, and spiritual thoughts of the great Source of all being.

II. THOUGH WE MAY NOT REPRESENT GOD HIMSELF, WE MAY REPRESENT THE SPHERE AROUND HIM. Moses and the elders did not represent the being or person of God himself; only the glory of the "sapphire" round about him. Isaiah did not see *him* who sat on the throne; only the splendour of the throne, and the attitudes of the attendant courtiers. Heaven is so fully described in the New Testament as the sphere where God dwells, in order to relieve us of distress on account of the impossibility of picturing to us God himself. We see the *cloud* that shrouds him, and the fire that is an emblem of him; and we are taught to see in the vast blue dome of the sky the abode where he dwells. And being thus fittingly impressed, we are encouraged to argue out the question—What must *he* be, whose "robe is the light, whose canopy space"?

III. OUR REPRESENTATIONS SHOULD WORTHILY EXPRESS OUR CONCEPTIONS OF THE DIVINE SURROUNDINGS. This is the ground on which we consecrate architectural genius and artistic skill to the building and the decoration of our sanctuaries. If we may represent the *surroundings* of God, we must try to represent them worthily. The palace of the great King of kings ought to be "exceeding magnifical." God's own representation of his surroundings is sublime creation: the blue, star-studded dome of sky; the many-sounding, vast sea; the everlasting mountains; the harvest-laden plains; the million-flowered earth. Our representation—in our temples and churches—should be the *ideal beauty* of each age; classic, Gothic, or otherwise, as fits the sentiment of each age. Illustrate what proper moral impressions are produced by our cathedrals, abbeys, and churches towering above the houses of our cities, and made our architectural models. It is a right and true feeling which leads us to build magnificent temples and churches, and to arrange beautiful and artistic services. Yet we must jealously

keep the feeling that these are, at best, but suggestions of the "surroundings" of God, and they leave the infinite mystery of *God himself* wholly unrevealed.—R. T.

Vers. 7, 8.—*The grounds of Divine refusals.* God would not permit David to build his temple, and he was graciously pleased to signify to him the grounds on which this refusal was made: "Because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight." For illustrations of the bloody character of David's wars, see 2 Sam. viii. 2, 5; x. 18; xii. 31; 1 Kings xi. 16. David's mission did not appear to consort with David's wishes. He did not, however, see an unfitness which God recognized. A man must let God tell him what he may do and what he may not; and full willingness thus to receive Divine direction is a high sign of the true submission. No man ever finds it easy to give up his long-cherished wishes.

I. **A MAN MAY WILL MORE THAN HE MAY PERFORM.** Distinguish carefully between *willing*, or seriously purposing, and mere *wishing*. A man's sentimental wishes mean nothing, and cannot stand in place of right deeds; but a man's definite plans and purposes may be as true expressions of character and righteousness as actual deeds could be; and so God may say, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart." One of the gravest troubles to the earnest man is the impossibility of carrying into effect one-half of what he can purpose and desire to do. The artist has his visions of more and better pictures than he can ever paint. The author plans more and better books than he will ever write. The Christian resolves upon nobler works than he will ever accomplish, and a nobler life than he will ever live. From this common fact an important argument for man's immortality may be drawn. There must be the *larger sphere* in which man may find the *room* which he vainly seeks here.

II. **A MAN'S PROVIDENTIAL PLACE MAY PUT HIM IN LIMITATIONS.** David was where God had put him, and in his wars he had been doing the work which God required him to do; and yet he found his very life-work limited him; and his very faithfulness to God hindered his accomplishment of his own cherished desires. So it often is still. A man's providential place is one he never would have chosen. A man's life-work is one that prevents his following out his own wishes. At this men often fret, fancying themselves fit for far higher work than is given to their charge. But the true-hearted man accepts the Divine overruling and the painful limitations, learning to say calmly, "My times are in thine hand," and thankful that in *some sphere* he may carry out the Divine purposes of grace.

III. **THE DIVINE REFUSAL OF A MAN'S PERSONAL WISH IS ALWAYS WISELY BASED.** God sees influences and consequences which the man himself may fail to discern. God works ever for the larger good of the *whole*, and his sphere takes in wider considerations than any individual can reach. God's estimate of what a man is, and is fit for, may well differ from a man's own estimate of himself. And God's sensitiveness to what is befitting we may be sure is keener and altogether more refined and subtle than any man's. Enough that we are sure all God's decisions are based on the judgments of infinite wisdom, and never on mere eccentricities of feeling.

IV. **YET THE PURPOSE WHICH A MAN MAY NOT EXECUTE MAY WIN THE DIVINE ACCEPTANCE.** David's intention was acknowledged graciously, and the next best thing was given him. His *son* should do what he might not do; and that son should do it as soon as David had passed away. And even more than this: the preparation work David was himself permitted to arrange, and the plan he might devise; so that, after all, the temple that was ultimately built was more David's than Solomon's.

Plead that a man does well who has great things in his heart; but he must be sure that Divine providences and leadings—and *nothing else*—keep him for carrying them out and giving them practical effect.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*The mission of the men of rest.* The anticipative description of Solomon, as the man conceived by God to be fitted for the work of building his temple, is this—"He shall be a man of rest." Very remarkable is the fact which may constantly be observed, that successors in office are usually marked contrasts in character, disposition, and modes of working. This is often observed in clergymen and ministers, and it is very marked in the succession of Solomon to David. The connections between the two we often cannot trace, and it seems as if the one could not possibly carry on to its com-

pletion the work of the former. Yet what seem to us to be *contrasts* may seem to God to be relations, the one becoming an actual preparation for the other. There are times when the work of God in the world needs the men of battle—the Davids and the Wellingtons; and there are other times when God needs the men of rest—the Solomons and the Gladstones. It may be well to show what gracious work for the well-being of mankind has always been done in times of peace and by men of peace. And yet such times have their peril, and round again comes the necessity for the rougher ages of conflict and intenser feeling. These points may be dealt with under several headings. Before presenting these, a few sentences from F. W. Robertson's lecture on Wordsworth may be given, as suggestive of the mission of the men of rest. He says, "I will remark that Wordsworth's was a life of contemplation, not of action, and therein differed from Arnold's of Rugby. Arnold is the type of English action; Wordsworth is the type of English thought. If you look at the portraits of the two men, you will distinguish the difference. In one there is concentrativeness, energy, proclaimed; in the eye of the other there is vacancy, dreaminess. The life of Wordsworth was the life of a recluse. In these days it is the fashion to talk of the dignity of work as the one sole aim and end of human life, and foremost in proclaiming this as a great truth we find Thomas Carlyle. . . . In opposition to this, I believe that as the vocation of some is naturally work, so the vocation, the Heaven-born vocation of others, is naturally contemplation."

I. **WHAT MAY BE DONE BY "MEN OF REST" IN THE NATIONAL ORDER?** Explain the perilous sentiments, painful conditions, and sense of exhaustion left from war-times. Harvests soon wave again where heroes shed their blood, but the moral condition of a nation cannot soon be recovered from the evils of war. New sentiments have to be inculcated, and the arts of peace have to be cultivated. Show how much peace-loving men do in our day towards keeping the nations, in their disputes, from seeking the fearful arbitrament of war. Nations ought to thank God more for her great peace-leaders than for her great war-victors.

II. **WHAT MAY BE DONE BY "MEN OF REST" IN THE SOCIAL SPHERES?** In war-times social evils are neglected, and suffered to grow rank, as ill weeds do in the untended garden. And the good things of education and artistic culture, and the right development of the family life, are lightly esteemed. The "men of rest" find out the prevailing evils of an age, reveal them in satire, or poetry, or picture, or moral teachings, and devise schemes for national and social reformations. Illustrate from some of the social and educational schemes of the last sixty years of comparative peace since Waterloo. Recall names of men who have done good social work.

III. **WHAT MAY BE DONE BY "MEN OF REST" IN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD OF THOUGHT AND LIFE?** Apply to Christian *doctrine*. Men have framed doctrinal schemes in times of conflict—conflict of opinions and conflict of nations—and the man does an infinite good to Christian thought who, only in small degrees, relieves from Christian doctrine the mischievous *war* associations, and puts in their place the truer *family* ones. But we may apply also to Christian *worship* and Christian *life*. Mystical and spiritual insight of the fuller truth is given only to the "men of rest." Solomon's times remind us that peaceful ages have their own perils, and peaceful men their own temptations.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*Early signs of the filial relation.* God gathers up into one expressive, suggestive, and satisfying term the relation in which he would stand to Solomon. That term could be no other than *Father*—"And I will be his Father;" "He shall be my son." The revelation of the *Divine fatherhood* was the distinctive mission of Christ. The commendation of the *filial spirit* was the special duty of the apostles. These may be illustrated as introductory to the subject on which we now more particularly dwell; which is, the Old Testament indications of the fatherhood of God and sonship of men. It must be admitted that the term *Father* as applied to God in the Old Testament is only a figure of speech, designed to bring out and express God's affectionate interest in his people; and the Lord Jesus Christ, by his own sonship and teaching, brought to light those comprehensive, inspiring, and ennobling views of the Divine fatherhood which we now know and properly regard as characteristically Christian. The figure of God as a *Father* was an aid to the complete apprehension of God, but it is now the one

all-including conception of God, which is at once the foundation of theology and of faith. In this, as in so much else, the Old Testament prepared for the New. In reviewing Old Testament references to God as a Father, we notice—

I. THE TEACHING OF THE PATRIARCHAL RELIGION. It has not been sufficiently considered that the first relation in which God placed man to a being outside himself was that of *father*. Eve was part of Adam's self. Cain was Adam's son. The most essential relation of human beings is that of the parent and children. This highest and most necessary relation was the shadow and revelation of the Divine relation. For a long period the patriarchal system kept the fatherhood prominently before the minds of men. The great tribal *father*—*patriarch*—was the earthly representative of the Divine Being, through whom right ideas concerning God and his relations with men were reached. Note that, in the very first form of fatherhood, rule, authority, governance, were essential elements: the father was virtual *king*, and much more.

II. THE SON-LIKE ATTITUDE OF TRUE PIETY IN EVERY AGE. The good man is conceived as a *son*; and the very ideal of goodness is an obedient, affectionate, and submissive son. Illustrate from Isaac's relation to Abraham, especially in the matter of the required sacrifice. But fully illustrate from the Book of Psalms. The more perfectly the spirit which the psalmist *wins* and *seeks* is apprehended, the more clearly it appears that it will go into the one word "sonship." The submission of reverence and confidence, with the obedience of tenderest affection, are chief features of sincere piety, and as certainly precise features of good sonship. The *son*-figures, as used in the Old Testament—such as in the text—should be given.

III. THE NEW FORCE PUT INTO THE RELATION BY THE PROPHETS. Giving prominence to the spiritual over the ceremonial and governmental, the prophets cannot be satisfied with a kingly representation of God, or a priestly. They want to present a Divine relation to men which is more than official, other than *official*; so they use the parental figure, and the terms "father" and "son." Illustrative instances may be found in Isa. ix. 6; lxiii. 16; lxiv. 8; Jer. xxxi. 9; Mal. i. 6; ii. 10, etc. God in *judgment* will certainly be misapprehended unless we see him to be the *Father-God* in judgment, and are willing to take our illustrative figures from the father, wisely, judiciously, and with a view to the highest good, chastening his child whom he loves. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." In a similar way every relation of God may be taken, and the importance of accepting the last and fullest revelation of God, as Father, may be shown to be necessary to its proper apprehension. We should rise from such preparatory and suggestive figures of speech as this in the text, to the high Christian conception of God as the "Father of Jesus," the "holy Father," the "righteous Father."—R. T.

Vers. 12, 13.—*Conditions of prosperity.* Solomon was distinctly informed that continuance of prosperity depended entirely on his continuing faithfulness to Jehovah. The "throne of his kingdom was to be established *for ever*," but only then should he prosper, if he "took heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the Lord charged Moses with concerning Israel." God's positions for his servants, and promises to them, are always dependent on *conditions*; no Divine promise is ever unqualified. None fail to take into due consideration the character and the conduct of those to whom the promise is made. Illustrate by the great covenant made with Israel; by the assurances given to Joshua (Josh. i. 7); and by such prophetic declarations as Isa. i. 18, 19; iv. 1—3, 6, 7, etc. There is always an *if* attached to the Lord's promise, but it is always virtually the same *if*—"if ye be willing and obedient." We may say that there are four conditions on which prosperity is dependent.

I. WE MUST WORK FOR GOD. Having this as our supreme aim; and not being, even in any subtle ways, set upon mere self-seeking. Full loyalty to this supreme motive is quite consistent with giving due place to inferior motives. And the daily culture of spiritual life bears directly on this *working for God*; keeping ourselves ever as in the "great Taskmaster's eye."

II. WE MUST WORK IN THE SPIRIT OF FAITH AND DEVOTION. Of faith, as trust, making us lean on Divine strength; and devotion as keeping our souls fully open to Divine influence. Carrying the spirit of prayer into daily work.

III. WE MUST WORK IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAW. Both that written in the Book, and that ever freshly written by the Spirit on the "fleshy tables of the heart."

IV. WE MUST WORK WITH ENERGY AND GOOD WILL. Wisely and skilfully combining the human powers that guarantee success, with the trust in God on which success must ultimately depend. 'The man who *trusts most* always *works hardest*'.

On these conditions the true prosperity must come; but it may be such as men will not so name.—R. T.

Vers. 14—16.—*One man's work for God fits into, and follows on, another man's.* David was the preparer for Solomon the builder, and it is not for us to say which *part* of the work was the more important. Both together went to the execution of the Divine purpose. So, in every age, "one soweth and another reapeth," but the sower ever prepares for the reaper. Every man may cherish the conviction that his work has its place, and, if he faithfully does it, it will be sure to fit, and help towards the realization of the *good* Divine thought for the race. This may be illustrated in science: the inventions and discoveries of one age prepare the way for the advances made in a later age. Franklin would be as much amazed as any of us with the modern mysteries of telegraph and telephone and electric light, and yet, by his discovery, he distinctly prepared the way for all these developments. The same may be seen in relation to our Lord's life-mission. It could not have been all that we know it was, if it had been a sudden and unconnected thing. Patriarch, and lawgiver, and psalmist, and poet, and prophet, and Baptist, may fairly and truly say that they took part in the redemption of the world, since each one, in his sphere, helped to prepare the way for Christ.

I. ISOLATE ANY MAN'S LIFE, AND IT MAY SEEM TO BE A FAILURE. Do this with any of the world's great men, in Scripture or in history, and nothing can be made of their careers. In their *connections* only can their meaning and purpose be unfolded. This reveals the reason for the imperfection in our estimate of the life-work of any man who lives and dies among us. His *personnel* fills our vision. We see *him*. He is isolated; and we cannot well see how he fits into his place. Men have to die, their stories must become history, before we can cease to isolate them. No man can hope to be fairly judged by his own generation. And no man can efficiently judge his own work. Even our Lord's life-mission cannot be apprehended if we venture to separate him from his historical associations. Apply these considerations to the distress into which good people sometimes get respecting the value of their work. It seems to be brief, worthless, cut off while incomplete. So we may think when our eyes are fixed only on *it*; but the view is incomplete and therefore unworthy. It may well be corrected by a larger vision.

II. CONNECT ANY MAN'S LIFE WITH THE PAST AND THE FUTURE, AND IT WILL BECOME PLAIN HOW HE FITS INTO THE DIVINE PURPOSE, AND AIDS THE HUMAN PROGRESS. This we may, indeed, be only able to do in part, but we can do it sufficiently to assure our hearts that he who has the perfect vision sees the fittings and relations of each man and each man's service. We can see some of the ways in which men at once serve their generations, and prepare for the generation that is coming. 1. Some men have to drag and hold back a too hurried and perilous advance. This is the work given of God to the *conservative-toned* men among us. 2. Some men have to keep up the standards, in morals and opinion. These may be men of battle, who are keen to discern and quick to resist evils; or they may be men of contemplation, who lift up seemingly unattainable *ideals*. 3. And some men have to advance the standards. These are the men whom we regard as "*before their time*," who, at some peril to their own reputation, and much to their own comfort, bring us foreshadowings of the truths which are to be the commonplaces of the next generations.

God always has other men ready to take up our work when we drop it. A beautiful and effective illustration may be drawn from the struggle for the standard at the Battle of Lutzen, where Zwingli fell, as described by D'Aubigné in his 'History of the Reformation.'—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*Work for God must be done with heart and soul.* "Now set *your heart and your soul* to seek the Lord your God." Scripture uses several terms for the composite being, *man*, but it may be questioned whether, without undue forcing, we can form, on a Scripture basis, either a dualistic or tripartite theory of man's being. We find the term *body*, as indicating the physical being, set in relations with an external

world by its five senses ; the term *heart*, as inclusive of the mind and the affections, set in relations with the world of thought, and the world of fellow human beings ; and the term *soul*, as the equivalent of that spiritual being which is set in relation with God, and has its life only in him. But, though these may be the stricter meanings and uses of these terms, they are often used in Scripture as figures of speech ; and a man is said to work with his heart when he *likes* to do what he is undertaking, and a man is said to do a thing with his soul when he does it *with a will*, with energy and perseverance. It will afford some effective contrasts to consider *conceivable* ways of working for God, and the illustrations of each will be at once suggested, so that they will need no more than statement.

I. WORK FOR GOD MAY BE BY ACCIDENT ; either of place, or circumstance, or association.

II. WORK FOR GOD MAY BE BY COMPELSION ; as may be illustrated in the case of Cyrus, of whom God says, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." God makes even the "wrath of man praise him ;" and bad men have, unwillingly, done his sovereign will.

III. WORK FOR GOD MAY BE DONE THROUGH WORKING FOR SELF ; one who seeks only his own ends may find that, without credit or blessing to himself, he has really served God.

IV. WORK FOR GOD MAY BE DONE HALF-HEARTEDLY. We may "fear the Lord, and serve other gods."

V. WORK FOR GOD MAY BE DONE, AND SHOULD BE DONE, WITH CULTURED BODILY POWERS ; WITH HEART-JOY IN GOD ; and WITH THE INSPIRATION OF THE SOUL'S DEVOTION. Of such work for God the Lord Jesus Christ presents the highest type ; but the example is—as a *human* example, within human reach.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIII.

This chapter is the first of four employed on the subject of the Levites and the services distributed among them. The twenty-four orders of priests, sons of Aaron, occupy ch. xxiv. The twenty-four orders of the singers and musicians occupy the contents of ch. xxv. And the divisions of the porters, with their gates ; and of those Levites who had the keeping of the treasures of the house of God ; and the officers and judges, fill up ch. xxvi. After which the compiler is again awhile clear of the Levitical tribe.

Returning to our present chapter, it gives an account of the numbers of the Levites, of their classification, of David's fresh arrangement of them and fresh distribution of their work (vers. 1—6). But altogether the largest portion of the chapter (vers. 6—32) is occupied with the rehearsal of the heads of houses composing the four Levite families, and their offices.

Vers. 1—5.—*The numbering and the classification of the Levites.*

Ver. 1.—David . . . made Solomon his son king over Israel. These words give the

key-note of what remains in this book. David made his son king, as he himself acknowledges (ch. xxviii. 5), under the superintending direction of God. The manner in which the formal event was precipitated by the conduct of Adonijah is found at length in 1 Kings i. 11—53. The original occasion alluded to there more than once, on which David promised, "and sware" to Bathsheba, that her son should be his chief heir and successor to the throne, is not distinctly recorded. We can easily assign one convenient place in the history for it to have found mention, viz. in 2 Sam. xii. 25. The brevity of the statement which composes this verse, when compared with all the deeply interesting matter recorded in 1 Kings i. 11—53, is one among many other very clear illustrations of the purposed silence of our present history in certain directions.

Ver. 2.—He gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites. As on an occasion of supreme importance, David, in view of his own death and of his son's succession at the present time, calls together the full council, and the highest possible representative council of the nation. So ch. xxii. 17; xxiv. 6; xxv. 1; in which last passage the word "captains" should have been rendered "princes" (נָצְרִים). The arrange-

ment of the Levites, and the distribution of their functions in the presence of the princes, as here described, and as it is even more strongly put (ch. xxv. 1), “*by*” them, simply points to the fact that the ultimate outer authority, as between Church and state, lay with the state. The Church was made for it, not it for the Church. And it was the duty of the state to defend the Church.

Ver. 3.—Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upward. The thing which Joab had rightly resisted (ch. xxi. 3—6) and shrank from doing was now rightly done. There was now a practical and a legitimate object for doing it. This consideration helps to determine what it was that “*displeased the Lord*” in the former general census of David. In connection with this clause, ch. xxvii. 23 should be noted, where we read, “But David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under: because the Lord had said he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens.” The period from the age of thirty years up to fifty (Numb. iv. 3, 23, 35, 39) was fixed under Moses, for those “that came to do the service of the ministry, and the service of the burden in the tabernacle of the congregation” (Numb. iv. 47). It is not certain, however, that this census did not inquire, in point of fact, respecting some below this limit of age. For we may note ver. 24 in the first place, and this is partly explained by Numb. viii. 23—25. The number “thirty and eight thousand” of our present verse may be compared with the “eight thousand and five hundred and four score” of Numb. iv. 47, 48. It is to be observed how promptly the national council did on this occasion commence with the arrangement of the ministers of religion, “the Levites.” As we read (Numb. iv. 3) of “thirty years” of age as the appointed age for the commencement of their ministry, and (Numb. vii. 3) of the present or “offering” of “six covered waggons and twelve oxen,” which the twelve “princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, princes of the tribes,” offered “before the Lord,” which greatly lessened the laborious work of the Levites; so we find the commencing age reduced from time to time, to “twenty-five” years (Numb. viii. 24), and to “twenty years” of age, as in our present chapter (vers. 24—28).

Ver. 4.—*To set forward* (Hebrew *רָאַזֵּב*, Piel conjugation). The strict meaning of the word here is *to superintend*. The word has already occurred in the same sense in ch. xv. 21. Officers and judges (Hebrew *רֹאָזִים* *רֹאָזִים*). The explanation of the nature of the work of these, as really out-

ward work, for the “outward business of Israel,” is distinctly stated in ch. xxvi. 29; 2 Chron. xix. 5—11. These *officers* are mentioned under the same Hebrew term in Exod. v. 6, in a very different connection. It is plain that they were generally foremen, or overseers; while the *judges* took cognizance of matters which involved the interests of religion. This verse and the following give between them the *four* divisions of Levites, afterwards to be more fully described. The fuller account of the “twenty-four thousand” priests (including attendants) occupies ch. xxiv.; the “six thousand” officers and judges, ch. xxvi. 20—32; the “four thousand” porters, ch. xxvi. 1—19; and the “four thousand who praised the Lord with the instruments,” ch. xxv.

Ver. 5.—*Porters* (Hebrew *מְנֻעָדִים*); *doorkeepers*. The word is so translated in ch. xv. 23, 24. It was the duty of these to keep the entrances of the sanctuary, by day and night, in their courses (see also 2 Kings vii. 10, 11). The Chaldaic equivalent of this word is *מְנֻעָד* (Ezra vii. 24; Dan. ii. 49). There is no connection between either the word or idea we have here, and those of Ps. lxxxiv. 11, where the Hithp. conjugation of *מְנֻעָד* is used, and the sense of residence probably intended to be conveyed. The instruments which I made . . . to praise. Possibly the quotation of a short sentence often on David's lips. Men given to music may have been very conscious of it, in ancient days, as well as in modern. The language, however, does not necessarily assert that David claimed the inventing or in any similar sense the *making* of these musical instruments, but that he appointed them for the service of praise. What some of them were may be seen in 2 Chron. v. 12—“cymbals, psalteries, harps, trumpets” (see also 2 Chron. xxix. 25—27; Neh. xii. 35, 36; Amos vi. 5).

Ver. 6.—Here begin the families of the Levites, as arranged in courses by David. These arrangements were scrupulously observed by Solomon (2 Chron. viii. 14; xxix. 25).

Ver. 7.—The heads of the houses of the first Levite family, viz., of Gershon, are now enumerated. The subject occupies the five verses that close with the eleventh. The family of Gershon branches into two—the name of the one Laadan (so written again in ch. xxvi. 21; but in ch. vi. 17, 20, as well as in Exod. vi. 17 and Numb. iii. 18, written *לִיבָּנִי*), and the name of the other Shimei.

Ver. 8.—This verse contains the names of the three so-called sons of Laadan, but (ch. xxvi. 22) the last two appear to have been grandsons.

Ver. 9.—This verse purports to give the

three sons of Shimei, but not the Shimei of ver. 7, but of a descendant of Laadan. This is made clear, not only by the remaining clause of this verse, which says, "These were the chief of the fathers of Laadan," and again by the enumeration in ver. 10 of sons of that Shimei who is coupled with Laadan in ver. 7, but also by a comparison of ch. xxiv. 22; xxvi. 21—26. It is, of course, possible that the name stands here in error for some other name, but the supposition is gratuitous.

Ver. 10.—(See Zech. xii. 13.) The Zina of this verse is Zizah in the very next verse, which difference of form cannot be accounted for by any mere clerical explanation. The name Jahath seems to have been a favourite name in this family (ch. vi. 43).

Ver. 11.—In one reckoning. The Hebrew of the word here translated "reckoning" is *תִּפְאַרְתָּה*, i.e. "enumeration." The meaning is they were accounted as only one "father's house." The derivative significations of the word are "care," "custody," and generally "office" (2 Chron. xxiii. 18). The total of Gershonite houses will amount to nine, three of these being houses of Shimei, and six of Laadan.

Ver. 12.—This and the following eight verses give the Kohath heads of houses (ch. v. 28; vi. 2, 3, 18; Exod. vi. 18; Numb. iii. 27), four in their leading divisions.

Ver. 13.—The sons of Amram. From Amram, the first-mentioned son of Kohath, come the two great names of Aaron and Moses (Exod. vi. 20). Aaron was separated, . . . and his sons for ever. This statement must be read, both with ver. 3—into the number of Levites mentioned in which Aaron and his sons do not count—and with ver. 14, which implies that Moses and his sons did count into that number. The sons of Aaron are dealt with in ch. xxiv. 1—19, *infra*. That he should sanctify the most holy things. The Hebrew text renders it doubtful whether the rendering here should not rather be, "Aaron was separated to sanctify *him* as most holy," etc. If it be so, this is the only place where the forcible term, "holy of holies" (most holy), is used of Aaron. The duties of the priest are described as threefold, in this place, viz.: "to burn incense before the Lord,"—this will carry the idea of making atonement; "to minister to God," on behalf of man,—this will be one part of the work of a mediator; and "to bless in the Name of God,"—this will fulfil the remaining part. *For ever*. The proviso may, no doubt, include reference to the "ever-living High Priest." The threefold summary of solemn and beneficent duties receives ample illustration from many passages, and in special connection with the names of Aaron and his sons

(Exod. xxviii. 1, 38, 43; xxix. 1, 35, 45; xxx. 7—10; Numb. vi. 22—27).

Ver. 14.—Moses the man of God. This title is distinguished by the presence of the article. The 'Speaker's Commentary' mentions it as occurring only nine times, of which five instances belong to Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 1; Josh. xiv. 6; 2 Chron. xxx. 16; Ezra iii. 2; with the present place); three instances show the title applied to David (2 Chron. viii. 14; Neh. xii. 24, 36); and once it is applied to Shemaiah (1 Kings xii. 22). Although the sons of Moses belonged, as is here said, to the tribe of Levi, they did not belong to that portion which discharged priestly duties.

Ver. 15.—We read of the birth of Gershom to Moses and Zipporah (Exod. ii. 22; see also xviii. 4, where Eliezer is also spoken of).

Ver. 16.—Shebuel (comp. ch. xxiv. 20, where the name appears as *Shubael*; and xxvi. 24).

Ver. 17.—Rehabiah. He was the chief (בָּשָׁרְתָּה); but it happened that he was also the only son. Hence it is added in antithesis that his sons were very many (see the name again, ch. xxvi. 25). The non-priestly Amramites are therefore seen to correspond with the houses of Shebuel and Rehabiah.

Ver. 18.—Of the sons of Izhar. While six names in all are mentioned under Amram, only one, Shelomith, is found under his next brother, Izhar. This Shelomith (spelt *Shelomoth* in ch. xxiv. 22) is not the same with the Shelomith of ch. xxvi. 25, 26.

Ver. 19.—Hebron. This third son of Kohath furnishes four houses. So again in the twenty-third verse of the following chapter.

Ver. 20.—Jesiah; in ver. 25 of next chapter written *Ishiah*. The two houses from Uzziel given in this verse make up the number of houses from Kohath to nine (as given again in ch. xxiv. 20—24), and to these must be added the priests through Aaron and his sons, two houses, making in all eleven.

Ver. 21.—This and the following two verses give the houses of Merari, contributing four houses, and, with the nine Gerbonite and eleven Kohathite, adding up to twenty-four. Merari is the third son of Levi (Gen. xlvi. 11). The Mahli and Mushi of this verse were possibly *grandson* and *son* of Merari, if we follow the guidance of ch. vi. 47. Yet it would seem far more natural to explain this last-quoted passage by our ver. 23, which would then parallel it. Otherwise we must account for the name of Mahli habitually standing first, as here, as in ch. vi. 19 also, and ch. xxiv. 26, as also in Exod. vi. 19; Numb. iii. 20, 33, etc.; in all of which places the statement is as distinct as in this verse, that Mahli and Mushi

were sons. This and the following verse must be compared particularly with ch. xxiv. 26—29; the *Jazziah* of which passage was evidently no son of Merari, on a par with Mahli and Mushi, but a later descendant. His descendants were three—Shoham, Zaccur, and Ibri (Beno being no proper name, but signifying “his son”).

Ver. 22.—*Their brethren . . . took them; i.e. their kinsmen, as margin, “took them” to wife (Numb. xxxvi. 5—12).* (For the sons of Kish, see ch. xxiv. 29.)

Ver. 23.—*The sons of Mushi* (comp. ch. xxiv. 30).

Ver. 24.—This and the remaining verses of the chapter contain some general provisions regarding the offices and future work of the Levites—in part David's last edition of such provisions. (On the present verse comp. Numb. i. 1—4; iv. 1—3, 21—23, 29, 30; viii. 23—26.) It is not easy to reconcile this verse with ver. 3. Keil cuts the knot at once by supposing the “thirty” years of ver. 3 to be the error of a copyist, to whose inemory the Mosaic census was present. And with Bertheau, he objects to the supposition that this verse describes a supplementary census, in conformity with “David's last words” (ver. 27), and as contrasted with his former directions. With the exception of what is contained in vers. 25—27, it is true that these do not offer themselves sufficient indications to make one feel confident of this explanation. On the other hand, to set down the number “thirty” in ver. 3 at once to the mistake of a copyist is too summary and convenient a way of escaping an awkward difficulty. It is evident that the following three verses do purport to explain why at this time the age of allowable service was altered to a standard so much lower than of old, and to assert that this alteration was recognized by the last orders of David.

Ver. 25.—*For David said.* The “for” of this clause cannot be supposed to account exclusively for the inclusion in the census of Levites beginning from the age of twenty years; it accounts no doubt for the *whole* proceeding. Since there would be no more journeys for people, for buildings, or for sacred vessels, it was now fully time to organize religious duty and “the service of the house of God” in a manner adapted to permanent institutions. In order to this, the first step was to know and to arrange the number of those who were answerable for sacred duties.

Ver. 26.—*And also unto the Levites.* Emphasis is laid on the thought of the relief that permanent habitation in Jerusalem conferred on the Levites over and above the whole body of the rest of the people. They will no more be mere burden-

bearers, though the burdens they bore were of the most sacred character.

Ver. 27.—*The . . . words of David.* Although there are many instances of the expression, “the words of” David or some other king, as equivalent to his “doings” (ch. xxix. 29; 2 Chron. ix. 29), and not a few instances of the same phrase, standing for the “account” or “history” of any one (ch. xxvii. 24; xxix. 29, three times; 2 Chron. ix. 29), the expression here may rather parallel passages like 2 Sam. xxiii. 1; 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

Ver. 28.—*Because their office; i.e. probably the office or position of all, including the younger Levites.* The development and greater detail of their varied duties, as the working staff of the “sons of Aaron,” are alluded to here; and how priests, Levites, and Nethinim (ch. ix. 2) all now formally undertook the whole range and scope of their functions is suggested. The work of these assistants of the “sons of Aaron” is detailed in three or four items, so far as this verse goes. They are first generally for the sacred service of the house of the Lord. That sacred service is in the matter of the courts (Exod. xxvii. 9; 1 Kings vi. 36; Conder's ‘Bible Handbook,’ pp. 376—378, 2nd edit.); of the chambers (ch. ix. 26; Ezek. xl. 17; xlii. 1; Neh. x. 38; Conder's ‘Bible Handbook,’ pp. 376, 380); of the purifying of all holy things; and of the work, i.e. the performing of the sacred service of the house of God.

Ver. 29.—*Both for the shewbread, and . . . size.* Seven other specifications of service are continued in this verse, with which we may compare ch. ix. 26—32. *For the shewbread.* The first mention of shewbread is found in Exod. xxv. 30. The directions for making it are found in Lev. xxiv. 5—9. The twelve unleavened cakes of which it consisted, heaped on the table in two piles, represented the twelve tribes, and intimated the Divine acceptance of the offerings of each faithful tribe (see also 2 Chron. xiii. 11). *For the fine flour for meat offering.* This is spoken of in Exod. xxix. 40; Lev. ii. 1—7; vi. 14, 15, 19—27; xxii. 13; xxiv. 5. *For the unleavened cakes . . . the pan . . . fried.* These are spoken of in Lev. ii. 4—7. *For all manner of measure and size;* Hebrew מֶתֶאַת, מֶתֶאַת. These two words occur also in Lev. xix. 35, 36, where they are rendered respectively “in measure” and “in meteyard.” Perhaps the exacter rendering here would be “for all matters of liquid and solid measure.”

Ver. 30.—*To stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord* (so ver. 13 of this chapter and ch. xxv. 7). Though Bertheau sees no special sign in the connection for this description to be confined to

the four thousand whose special work and privilege it was, yet it is in entire analogy with the whole context so to confine it.

Ver. 31.—*And to offer*; Hebrew, “*and for all the offering of burnt offerings*.” For other references to the help which the Levites gave in the matter of the burnt offerings, and for the number (2 Sam. ii. 15; Numb. xxviii. 1-31) of them, see Numb. xxix. 2-34; 2 Chron. xxix. 32-34; xxv. 2-12. The priests alone performed the actual sacrifices. The set feasts. These refer to the three: (1) the Passover

(Lev. xxiii. 4, 5); (2) the Pentecost (Lev. xxiii. 15-17); (3) the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 33-37).

Ver. 32.—*Keep the charge of the tabernacle . . . holy place . . . sons of Aaron.* This concluding verse is equivalent to a quotation from Numb. xviii. 1-7; in the first verse of which passage Aaron and the priests generally are reminded both of their representative character and position, and of the solemn responsibility which rested on them.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 13.—*The threefold functions of the priest.* In the words of this verse the compiler of the Chronicles sums the characteristic functions of the priest. It was now nearly five centuries since these had been distinctly prescribed by heavenly legislation for the religious observance of a nation, and for the religious education of far more than a nation, when David reviews the solemn institution of the priesthood. He wishes to see holy men in their places, and holy duties efficiently discharged. Time has helped to show their importance, and to illustrate the deeper significance which inhered in them. Perhaps it has in some degree availed also to disconnect men's minds from their pure original. A journeying people, a warring nation, a wandering ark and sometimes dishonoured, an irregular celebration of religious service, have all tended in some degree to harm the freshness of impression and of *stamp* which a Heaven-derived “pattern” should make on men's hearts through ages and centuries have passed. Now that the nation was settling in its new territory long promised, the crisis was opportune for David to reconnect the great religious authorities of his kingdom with their original beginning. And our chronicler, though added centuries have passed, when he writes, knows their importance too well to omit the record of the fact, even though it be repetition and copy only. The threefold work of the priest is the matter of description here, and consists of—

I. The duty TO BURN INCENSE BEFORE THE LORD. The burning of the incense on that golden altar in the holy place, which was constantly fed with the costliest of material, was the act distinctively of the priest. For the “stranger to come near” with any view of usurping this function was to incur prompt punishment (Numb. xvi. 40; 2 Chron. xxvi. 16, 18). Do sudden danger and the threat of wrath impend? the ruler, legislator, prophet, conjures the priest to “take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and *make an atonement* for them” (Numb. xvi. 46, 47). The burning of the incense was the immediate preliminary of the morning sacrifice, or immediate accompaniment of the evening sacrifice (Exod. xxx. 7, 9; Luke i. 9, 10; Lev. xvi. 13), and was a very special part of the arrangements of the ceremonial on the great Day of Atonement, and of its sacrifice (Lev. xvi. 11-13). It is difficult, amid a choice of many theories, to identify with any comfortable assurance the real symbolical significance of incense and its burning, yet the fact remains patent of its close relationship with the act of sacrifice in all the formal services of the Israelites. As it is said, “And without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. ix. 22), so it might almost without qualification be said that without incense there was no shedding of blood for any of the stated sacrificial objects. This would sufficiently defend the use of this part of the high priest's (and later of the ordinary priest's) duty, as speaking the very first and chiefest of all that makes up his *raison d'être*. But beyond this, it is impossible to doubt that the burning of the incense, in the golden censer and with the special fire, had its own significance, worthy of the priest's own performing. Whether it were expressive of the fragrant acceptableness of human service and sacrifice to him in heaven, as it ascended; or whether rather its diffusive and pervading influences amid the congregation or the groups of humanity below were regarded; whether it symbolized the rising prayers and aspirations and glowing devotion of those who sought their Father and God, or, as has been suggested,

something more specific, as *e.g.* prayer alone, or that form of prayer called intercession, and *so* understood, to be regarded as typical of the intercession of the great Intercessor; it spoke some proffered approach of the sinful creature to the condescending Creator, fit to be set forth by the priest himself, and by none inferior to him. For the modern apostle of Christ, for the modern minister and preacher of the truth of Christ, for the modern pastor and under-shepherd of "the flock of God," there is no duty that consists in the offering of sacrifice on their behalf or the burning of incense; but upon such lies perpetual and most solemn the responsibility of pointing to *the* Sacrifice for sin, and of insisting on all that helps to denote the acceptableness and the fragrance of that Sacrifice so illustrious. There is nothing *more* incumbent on the man who professes to seek to lead his fellow-creature to God than this. And it should have a prominence given to it, not less decided than that indicated by the place here given in this three-fold description of the priest's duties to the burning of incense.

II. The duty to MINISTER UNTO THE LORD. This simple and expressive description occurs above eighty times in the Pentateuchal, historical, and prophetical books of Scripture. It covers the whole range of those religious services, whether of the congregational or of the individual kind, allowed or appointed as the acceptable methods of the approach to God of his people Israel. He was not accessible to every person directly nor by every directest conceivable method. Long and plain as were the typical teachings of the sacrifices as such, so long and plain was the typical teaching under the ancient system of priests, of *this* fact, that the high and holy One was to be approached not without introduction, intervention, interposition. The various conditions of the intermediate approach were committed to the faithful priest. He was to become instructed and versed in them. He was to see that the people in no way suffered loss or unnecessary delay or difficulty in complying with them. And he was answerable directly to the Lord, whose servant he was for the people's sake. Hence he is said to "minister unto the Lord," although it was on behalf of the congregation or the individual Israelite. While, again, the modern preacher and pastor has no duty that can be described as the facsimile of this, yet in the first place, for all congregational *prayer* at least, his voice performs a service not dissimilar, as for some pastoral helps as well. But much rather would we again trace the deeper analogy. *The Minister, the Intercessor, is to be pointed to, of whom it is said, "He is Minister of the sanctuary, and true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man;" and that "he hath obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant" (Heb. viii. 2, 6).*

III. The duty to BLESS IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. This completes the sketch of the priest's work. He not only presents sacrifice and burns incense; he not only ushers the worshipper and his worship into the presence of the high and holy God; he also is privileged to speak the great God's blessings, to pronounce his favour, to assure of his pardon and mercy, and to wake to melody the hearts and voices of the vast congregation sometimes, in response to an announcement of Divine goodness and love. We know now no priests who have power to pronounce in their own right the absolution or remission of sins, or to volunteer the assurance of Divine benediction. The priests of Israel had not themselves such a right. But neither now does God authorize or inspire any class of men, or any individual man, to speak in these tones to their fellow-men, except on the real humble, hearty compliance of these latter with the conditions *laid down in Scripture*. To these men must apply, not to the voice or even the wisest, holiest judgment of a living man, who cannot tell the inmost heart nor gauge the absolute sincerity of the applicant. Still, indeed, may we speak hope to the repentant, peace to the humble of heart, mercy and love to the trustful and true, but as it were in the quotations of Scripture, and well safe-guarded by the Scripture conditions. All beyond this, all beside this, will be beyond our power and beside our rights. And instead of being the better part of a true priest, we are turned into false prophets even.

Ver. 25.—*The eye open to religious opportunity.* And that the eye of David showed itself now open to religious opportunity is not more plain than the reason of it—that his heart was open to it, nay, anxious and eager for it also. A crisis has now come, for which presumably the innermost heart of David has often longed. Though he had been the man of much war and of abounding activity, yet up and down his doings and his sayings there are not wanting indications that his heart sighed for peace and

rest. "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest" (Ps. lv. 6); "Rest in the Lord" (Ps. xxxvii. 7); "Return to thy rest, O my soul" (Ps. cxvi. 7). The crisis is not one when passion must have its way, when stern measures must be taken, when all things must be left to drift or else all be touched with an unwontedly firm hand. It is a crisis of much happier kind. Volume after volume of the history of Israel has been filled, and volumes not a few of the personal biography of David have been unerringly written. The last opens. Before his nation is spread out a wide, fair, enduring prospect of rest. Jerusalem "is at rest, and is quiet" (Isa. xiv. 7). David's whole heart enters into the satisfaction of the thought. Let us note the admirable use he makes of this state of things.

I. HE USES THE CRISIS FOR THE PURPOSES OF REVIEW. 1. Special audible acknowledgement is made of surpassing mercy. "David *said*" it. He did not merely observe it, ponder it, and then keep it locked in his own heart. While he himself enters into the satisfaction of the thought, he utters it aloud. 2. David owns the Giver of the good in question. It has not come of itself. It has not come of circumstances, of reaction traceable enough, of secondary causes whether more or less remote. "The Lord God of Israel" is the Giver, to whom all the nation's indebtedness shall be confessed. 3. David suggests the harmony of the gift with the Giver. God is the Giver. His people those who take all the benefit of his giving. And this the gift—*rest*. Rest under the Divine protection, in the Divine shade, the shadow of his wings and his throne, who bears a special favour to "his people," and who alone can make them "dwell secure." Full every way of *suggestion* is the utterance of David, were it but an articulate soliloquy.

II. DAVID, AS A KING, LEADER, TEACHER, ILLUSTRATES THE DUTY OF SUCH IN A CRISIS. While his language necessitates the comparison of the present with the past by very force of the *contrast* they present, and while it invites men to enter gratefully on the present enjoyments divinely offered, yet it associates new work, new opportunity, with these. Still the quest is to be loyalty and love to duty. He practically reminds a whole nation that: 1. Rest is favourable for order. Now, order may be honoured, recovered where it had been disturbed, studied to greater perfection even where it had not been very palpably infringed. Order is the beauty and glory of the whole universe. What room for improvement in it, in each individual heart and life, and in the life of every community! 2. Rest is favourable to growth. The winds that rock the trees help far down in the earth to provoke their roots to feel room for further growth, but the growing itself is not done while the storm lasts. How true this is of human character! It is our passionate, importunate cry to be hidden, to be sheltered, till the tempest is overpast, and the fury of the storm is spent. But *afterward* we grow. 3. Rest is the time for the cultivation of the devotion of the heart. It is true with no superficial, no mere sentimental truth, that—

"The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree,
And seem by thy sweet bounty made
For those that follow thee."

That Jesus recommended the sanctum of "the closet of prayer with the door closed; that he also himself sought retirement, privacy, solitude, with either the cover of deep shade or the suggestion of commanding prospects unfolding to the gaze, on mountain side or summit, are strong testimonies to the genius of rest and to the *habitat* of genuine devotion. 4. Rest gives grand opportunity for religious enterprise. Does the language sound a contradiction or paradoxical? It is not so in reality. The higher forms and conceptions of rest do not consist in inactivity, in the indulgence of lassitude, but in the cessation of waste energy, toil as unprofitable as laborious, or, if necessary (as the wars of Israel), as painful to the heart as strenuous to the hand. Most significant in this direction the words, "For he that hath entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his *own* works" (Heb. iv. 10). Heaven itself cannot possibly be viewed with satisfaction as a place or a state of inactivity. All the tasks of highest devotion may be supposed to be there the material of most strenuous achievement. But it will surely be both a place and a state delivered from the restless worry of care, the restless strife with sin, the restless struggle to elude or to bear sorrow, so familiar to the present. So when all outer care and war and work were removed awhile from the lot of Israel,

David flies to the thought of the great opportunity open for the works of religion. To these he directs his own enthusiastic study and labour. To these he calls his princes, priests, and a whole people.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 14.—“The man of God.” This designation was not peculiar to Moses. In the historical books of the Old Testament, we find prophets sent with a Divine message to their fellow-mortals described as men of God. In the New Testament we meet with the expression in Paul’s Epistles, where the inspired writers of the Hebrew Scriptures are denominated “holy men of God,” and where Timothy is addressed in similar language. Moses is designated “the man of God” in the Book of Deuteronomy, is so called by Caleb as we read in the Book of Joshua, and is so denominated in the title prefixed to the ninetieth psalm.

I. MOSES WAS THE MAN OF GOD’S SELECTION AND PRESERVATION. A kind Providence watched over him from the beginning of his life. Whilst multitudes were put to death, the child of Divine beauty was spared.

II. MOSES WAS THE MAN OF GOD’S EDUCATION AND DISCIPLINE. Trained in the court and the learning of Egypt, and afterwards in the rougher but wholesome school of the Midian desert, this man was fitted by knowledge, by hardship, by society of the most diverse kinds, for the great future before him.

III. MOSES WAS THE MAN OF GOD’S VOCATION. When God had trained him for his work, he called him, and made known to him his sacred Name and attributes, that thenceforth he might have the living consciousness of the Divine presence.

IV. MOSES WAS THE MAN WHOM GOD ADMITTED TO SPECIAL COMMUNION WITH HIMSELF. By the flaming thorn tree, upon the mountain solitude, at the door of the sacred tent, Jehovah met with his servant, and spake with him as a man with his friend.

V. MOSES WAS A MAN TO WHOM GOD COMMUNICATED HIS OWN SPIRIT AND HIS OWN CHARACTER. Again and again did the Lord speak words of confidence and approval with regard to his servant Moses. His meekness and holiness, his zeal for the glory of God, his patriotic desires for the welfare of his nation, all were indications that he was no unconscious instrument, but a willing and consecrated agent, in the hands of Heaven.

VI. MOSES WAS THE MAN WHOM GOD AUTHORIZED TO DECLARE HIS WILL. “The Law was given by Moses.” Hence he is called “the lawgiver.” Penetrated with the mind of the Supreme, he was empowered to promulgate, for the guidance of Israel, a code of laws altogether superior to those of other nations in ancient times. These laws embraced the moral as well as the civic life of the community, and aimed at the regulation of the heart as well as the life. Not only ordinances for conduct generally, but instructions for religious worship and sacrifice, were communicated by this “mediator” and “servant” and “man” of God.

VII. MOSES WAS THE MAN GOD CHOSE TO BRING OUT AND LEAD HIS PEOPLE. He was the shepherd who brought up the flock out of Egypt, and conducted the wanderers through the wilderness, and brought them to the verge of the green pastures of Canaan. God led, by the hand of his servant, the people who were his heritage.

VIII. MOSES WAS THE MAN WHOM GOD BURIED AND SO TOOK TO HIMSELF. As he was often alone with Jehovah in life, so he was alone with him in death.

IX. MOSES WAS GOD’S TYPE OF CHRIST. Jesus was the Prophet whom God raised up like unto his servant Moses. “The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

PRACTICAL LESSON. If the children of Israel were bound to hear and obey Moses, the man of God, the servant, how much more are we bound to hear and obey Christ, the Son of God!—T.

Ver. 30.—Morning and evening praise. The work of the Levites was “to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the Lord.” It was, therefore, to some extent servile and menial. Yet the work was dignified and hallowed by the fact that it was truly rendered to the God of Israel, the Lord of all. The function, however,

described in the text is the most honourable that can be performed by man. The glorified assembly above, the angelic hosts before the throne, are thus perpetually occupied.

I. THE OFFICE ITSELF OF PRAISE. The Levites were doubtless organized by David, as never before. His poetical and musical gifts were consecrated to the praise of Jehovah. His psalms from that time forward became the vehicle of human thanksgiving and adoration. The instruments of music which he appointed became essential to the ecclesiastical orchestra of the temple. And whilst thanks and praise are due from all intelligent beings to the God of providence, the human race has a special song to present, a special service to offer—thanks and praise to the God of all grace and salvation.

II. THE PERIODICAL OFFERING OF PRAISE. It was appointed for the Levites to stand, in due order and according to their courses, in the presence of Jehovah. And every morning and every evening the sacrifice of praise was offered as regularly as the burnt offering itself. How suitable was this arrangement must be apparent to every reflecting mind. Each day brings with it new favours, which should be welcomed with a grateful song. Each evening summons us to record renewed instances of Divine mercy and forbearance, for which the Giver of all good should be warmly praised.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. The duty and privilege of thanksgiving and adoration. “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto the Name of the Most High.” 2. The desirableness of periodical and regular daily devotions: “To show forth his loving-kindness in the morning, and his faithfulness every night.”—T.

Vera. 1, 2.—*Our hold upon the future.* When “David was old, and full of days” he contemplated his own death and what should then ensue—who should succeed him on the throne, and what should be the work and history of the nation he had governed. We are reminded of—

I. OUR DESIRE TO KEEP A HOLD UPON THE FUTURE. As the king, like all other monarchs, earnestly desired that, after his death, his own son should sit upon his throne; as he took the necessary steps to secure this by summoning all the leaders in the kingdom and giving them charge concerning him (ver. 2), so we desire to retain as much hold on human life as we can, even when our eyes shall be closed to its scenes and our ears be deaf to all its voices. Either in the person of those who are our second selves—the children of our love and our charge—or through our deliberately uttered wishes in documents or dying words, we desire to make ourselves felt, as the possessors of power, by the generation which will remain when we are no longer on the earth.

II. OUR POWER TO CARRY OUT OUR WISHES. “David made Solomon his son king over Israel.” He had the constitutional right to nominate his successor, and by solemnly designating him as such in the presence of “all the princes of Israel” he ensured his occupancy of the throne. There are ways by which we can make ourselves felt in the days which succeed our own. 1. By indoctrinating our children with our own beliefs and instilling into their minds our own spirit, we may live on *in them* and *in their lives*. 2. By bequeathing our property in such a way that future generations shall have cause to remember us (*e.g.* the founding of parks, hospitals, homes, etc.). 3. By documents which are valid in law by which we decide the way in which our property shall be used or our relatives be circumstanced.

III. THE LIMITATIONS OF THIS POWER. David could only make Solomon king by calling all his counsellors together and getting them to ratify his own decision; and then he had to leave the issue to Solomon’s own discretion. Had he (Solomon) acted as foolishly as his son afterwards acted, the throne would soon have passed away from him, and his father’s eager anticipations would have been defeated. Do what we may to retain a hold on the future through those who should be the inheritors of our principles and the executors of our will, we cannot really *ensure* anything we may devise. Those on whom we rest our strongest hopes may disappoint all our expectations and overthrow all our plans. The statesman’s great measure is repealed; the warrior’s proud conquest is undone, the millionaire’s splendid fortune is dissipated, the nobleman’s “house” is extinguished, the discoverer’s invention is superseded, the writer’s chief work is shelved, the teacher’s famous doctrine is exploded; the world moves on and

leaves us all behind. We need some better solace in the declining hour than the expectation that the kingdom will go to our sons, and thus be retained by ourselves. And we have a better one in—

IV. THE CHRISTIAN ASPIRATION. There are two worthy and honourable ambitions we may cherish respecting the future. 1. To live on, ourselves, in another sphere. Though not acting directly on the men and things we leave behind us, we shall be living and acting elsewhere in some other province of God's great domain. Enough for us that, in the sphere which God chooses for us, we shall be using our powers for good—*more than enough*, for that will be a wider sphere, and they will be “enlarged and liberated powers.” 2. To leave behind us in many hearts and lives the holy influence we have been exerting. If day by day we are scattering “the good seed of the kingdom” in true thoughts, in holy principles, in Christ-like impressions, these must and will appear again in other lives, and be again resown to reappear in others still; thus shall we have a blessed share in a far future, even in this lower realm.—C.

Vers. 3-32.—*The sacred tribe: their service and ours.* We have here—

I. THE SPECIAL SERVICE WHICH THE LEVITES RENDERED TO ISRAEL. This was four-fold. 1. Assisting at the service of sacrifice. They were “to set forward the work of the house of the Lord” (ver. 4); “their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the Lord,” etc. (vers. 28, 29); “to offer [i.e. to help at the offering of] all burnt sacrifices,” etc. (vers. 31, 32). 2. Rendering the service of praise. “Four thousand of them praised the Lord,” etc. (ver. 5). These were to stand every morning and evening to thank and praise the Lord (ver. 30). 3. Administration of civic business and pacification: “officers and judges” (ver. 4). 4. Guardianship of the gates; preserving from profanation, and so from Divine displeasure: “porters,” i.e. gatekeepers (ver. 5).

II. THE CHANGES WHICH OCCUR IN THE FORM OF SERVICE. Even under the same dispensation occasional changes occurred of the way in which God was served. An instance and indication of this is found here. The Levites had no more need to carry the tabernacle from place to place; they thus laid down one of their most solemn and important functions (vers. 25, 26). They were also henceforth to be numbered from twenty (instead of thirty) years of age (vers. 27, 28). And, further, they entered now on the service of instrumental music, systematically arranged (vers. 5, 30). If such minor changes occurred in the same era of religious history, how much greater changes in the order of service might we expect to find when one dispensation gave place to another, when the Law was lost in the gospel? Such we do find. We look, therefore, at—

III. OUR CORRESPONDING SERVICE UNDER CHRIST. 1. In the matter of sacrifice, the Levites cannot properly be said to have any successors; for, the one all-sufficient atonement having been offered, there is no sacrifice to be presented, and, there being no officiating priest and no altar “in Christ Jesus,” there is needed no ministering Levite. Only that we are all to be priests and Levites in that we are all to present “spiritual sacrifices” of prayer and praise, and of “doing good and communicating,” continually unto him. However, there are humbler services to be rendered, needful work to be done, “for the service of the house of the Lord” (ver. 24); and in this useful and worthy ministry, those who take their part cheerfully and do their work faithfully are “approved of him.” 2. In the matter of praise, the Levites find their successors in (1) those who teach and lead in the service of song in the Christian sanctuary; (2) all who join in and thus encourage others in that service. And they who do their best to perfect the praises of God—understanding by that not only attaining to the perfect scientific form of service, but reaching the moral and spiritual ideal of a service in which the music of the instrument and of the voice is subordinated to the melody of the heart (Eph. v. 19),—these render an invaluable ministry to the Church of Christ. 3. In respect of administration (officers and judges), as ecclesiastical law has given place to civil law, this function of Jehovah's servants has passed into other hands; yet perhaps they who are peacemakers between their fellows and help to decide disputes between brethren may be said to be the “judges” of the present time. 4. As to guardianship of the gates, with the open throne of grace and access at all times to all men, there is little room for us to perpetuate this work of the Levite. But we can, and should, take

great pains to preserve the spirit of reverence and pure devotion in the hearts of all who come to worship Christ.—C.

Vers. 1—32.—*Enumeration and arrangement of the Levites for their service.* The four chapters with which this commences give a connected view of the condition of the Levites towards the end, that is, the fortieth year of David's reign, and of the sections into which they were divided according to their various services. In this chapter the first thing with which we are presented is the total number of the tribe of Levi, and their divisions according to the duties devolving upon them. Next we have the enumeration of the heads of the houses of the fathers into which the four families of the Levites had branched out, with a brief account of their duties. All these arrangements immediately preceded Solomon's elevation to the throne. The first part of the third verse has reference to what was the *original* age at which the Levites were numbered. If we read, "Now the Levites had been numbered from thirty years old and upward," it will present no difficulty (see Numb. iv.). Moses himself had, however, at a later date, made their time of service from twenty-five to fifty years of age (see Numb. viii. 23—26). David reduced even this (see ver. 24), and made their service to commence at the age of twenty. The reason for this is given (see ver. 25). The Levites had now not to do the heavy work they had when marching through the wilderness, when they had to carry the tabernacle and its vessels. Now that this was over and the Lord had given them rest, they might enter on their work at an earlier age. The census presents us with the total number, namely, thirty-eight thousand men. Of these, twenty-four thousand were to conduct and carry on the work of the house of the Lord; six thousand were to be officers and judges; four thousand porters, and four thousand to praise the Lord. The work assigned to the twenty-four thousand is more particularly defined in vers. 28—32. Two great spiritual truths are presented in this chapter. 1. Every man has his own place to fill and his own special work appointed by God. This work is of various and diverse kinds. Some of it was more honourable, in a human point of view, than another; but each man was in his own divinely appointed place. Thus only can there be order and progress in the Lord's work by each one filling that place. "God is not the author of confusion," but of order. "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. But God hath tempered the body together . . . that there should be no schism in the body" (1 Cor. xii. 21—25). 2. The second truth is the great number set apart for praise and thanksgiving morning and evening (see vers. 5, 30). This was to form a conspicuous part of their service, and to take a prominent place. This is the highest kind of service. The New Testament is full of injunctions to joy and praise and thanksgiving. It implied, in Israel of old, "how much we have to praise him for!" And is it not true in all our work and service for God? Surely they who know the Saviour, and think for a moment what he is in himself, what he did for us on the cross, and what he is doing for us every day and every hour, have to praise him now and throughout eternity! Such praises should ever be in the heart and on the lips. One heart-look at Christ should banish all doubt and fear and make that heart sing for joy.—W.

Vers. 2, 3.—*The mission of the Levites.* They were called to service which men might call "menial," but which was truly "honourable," and might be made "more honourable by the loyal, devout, and loving spirit in which it was done. But there are indications that the Levites were tempted to undervalue their place and their work; they sometimes envied the priests, and fretfully wanted to be other than they were (see Numb. xvi. 9). Confusion and difficulty are sure to arise when men undervalue the positions in which they are set, and the work that is entrusted to them to do, and begin to envy other people's positions and other people's work. We treat here the mission of the Levites as introducing the subject of *our separation unto God's service*. What is called the Divine *election* may be fittingly called the Divine *selection*, for it really is God, in his infinite foreknowledge, selecting fitting agents, and, in the ordering of his providences, separating them unto the work for which he has chosen them. The sacred Word is full of instances of these Divine selectings and separatings. The race of Seth is separated from the other descendants of Adam. Noah is separated from the ungodly world. Japheth is

separated from the new races coming from Noah. Abraham is separated from the idolatrous Chaldeans. Isaac is separated as the sole heir of the covenant. Jacob, Judah, and Ephraim are separated by Divine intercession with the right of eldest sons. The nation of Israel is separated from all nations to be the repository of God's revelation. The tribe of Levi is separated to special service in the Divine tabernacle. Saul is separated to be the first king. David is separated from the sheepfolds. Our Lord separated twelve from among his disciples. Barnabas and Saul are separated unto the work of the ministry. Fixing our attention on the senses in which the Levites were separated from the congregation, we may learn some of the ways in which we should regard ourselves now as "separated unto God." The Levites were not made a distinct class, dwelling together; they lived about among the people, and shared the common life. They worked for a part at least of their living; their families grew up around them; they joined in the local feast as well as in the yearly festival. Their pleasures and their daily interests were precisely those of the people about them. And yet they were God's by special call and consecration. Wheresoever they went the stamp of the Holy rested upon them. Their very presence tended to check sin, and to purify the social atmosphere. The distinctness of the Levites belonged to their character, spirit, and tone of conduct. And they were called to a particular service. They were to attend on the worship of the tabernacle, taking their orderly turns. They were selected by God for this one life-work, "to bear the vessels of the Lord." They were called to receive a *trust*, and called to manifest the *spirit* which was becoming to that "trust." Still we find separation unto God quite compatible with taking our place among our fellow-men, and entering heartily into everything that properly belongs to family and social and national life. The world in which we live is God's world. In it there is nothing unclean, save to him who makes a thing unclean. Work is holy; rest is holy; pleasure is holy; friendship is holy. The Christian and the Christian Church stand out from all the world, and are set "in the world's eye;" and yet it is equally true that the Christian and the Christian Church blend and mingle in every sphere of life. They force no distinctions upon men's notice, and yet they are "separate" everywhere. Their distinction comes out of their first and ruling principles. The thought of God, the reference of all things to the will of God, and the effort to be in full harmony with the mind of God, are so essential to the Christian, and so characteristic of him, that he must bring the sense of God's presence into every life-association. And just in this lies his peculiarity and his mission. When a Jew looked upon a Levite in the midst of the people, he thought of Jehovah. When a Jew talked to a Levite, if he was a true Levite, he would make the man feel God's relation to the matter in hand. And so it is the Christian's mission to be an open "epistle of Christ." Levites failed from their duty, and from the joy of their duty, when they began to count their separation unto God a light thing. And this came about by their not putting their hearts into their work; by their nourishing jealousies and envyings; and by their failing to recognize how their work fitted into the great whole of God's service. Do we think it a small thing to have been separated unto God? Do we think unworthily of the talent committed to our trust? Can it be a little thing to be God's priests and Levites in his great world, ministering his truth, his will, his love, to men? Can it be a little thing to be the "candlestick" that holds out the light of God's holiness and God's gospel to men? Here is one chief root of the Christian evils which we deplore—under-valuing our Christian standing; under-estimating our Divine call, and the mission which is given us to fulfil. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*Consecrated maturity.* On the occasion of the "census," the tribe of Levi had not been taken. A special enumeration of them was now made, and the pattern of the Mosaic census was followed. Those at the age of thirty and above, but under fifty, alone were numbered. But the years from thirty to fifty represent and include a man's maturity; and, in the case of the Levites, this their maturity lay as a "living sacrifice" on the altar of God's service. It appears that our Lord began his ministry at the age of thirty. But "who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken." For probably at most three years of his maturity did he lie a

“living sacrifice.” Make the burden of address a serious and earnest plea that strong men should give the strength of their manhood to holy service for God in the Church and the world. It is the weakness of so many Christian institutions and enterprises—as it so notably is of our Sunday school system—that the experienced men and women of middle life hold aloof from them. There have indeed been cases of precocious development before the age of thirty; and we may not, even in our theories or our thoughts, set limits to the gloriously free operations of that Divine Spirit who “divides to every man severally as he wills.” Still, the general rule, comprehensively working, is that full culture—including something like adequate experience and due self-control—is not reached before that age. F. W. Robertson, A. Hallam, R. A. Vaughan, are very familiar illustrations of early maturity. It is also true that there is a limit—all too soon reached in most cases—to a man’s freshness, power, and originality. A man reaches maturity, and may maintain it awhile; but the time of strong and individual force for any man is usually very brief. No doubt there are cases of strength retained beyond the age of fifty; and there is suitable work in the world for the older men to do. But still, it is in large measure true that a man’s distinct life-witness and life-work are very brief—a few swiftly passing years. When they are done he either passes from the earth-spheres, or else he must step aside lest he be run down by the hurrying throng who go so much faster than he can go, and who, he begins to think, are going wrong. A man’s strong manhood is his great trust, and this must be for the Lord, wholly consecrated unto him. Then it may be earnestly pressed upon us that—

I. WE SHOULD ESTIMATE ARIGHT THE PREPARING-TIMES OF LIFE: the spring-times, on which depends the summer beauty; the seed-time, on which depends the autumn harvest; the child-time, on which depends wise fatherhood; the apprenticeship-time, on which depend the business successes.

II. WE SHOULD FEEL THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MATURE TIMES: when we can put strength, good judgment, cultured skill, ripe powers, into whatever work we undertake. It is often pressed on our attention that we are responsible for what we *have*; it may be much more earnestly impressed upon us that we are responsible for what we *are* or *can be*.

III. WE SHOULD ACCEPT THE PROVIDENCES THAT SET US ASIDE FOR RESTING-TIMES. Some such come in the midst of life’s works for our refreshing. Such come at last when our great life-work is done. We may be spared awhile in the Beulah-land, but in our resting-times we have new and other missions to fulfil. Alas! it takes much grace to make us willing to step quietly aside, and say of the new generation growing up round us, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

In the mystery of the Divine order the later and resting-times of a man’s life may be preparations for the consecrated maturities of the heavenly and eternal spheres.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Orderliness required in God’s service.* The chronicler here reviews the arrangements made by David for the efficient conducting of Divine service in the tabernacle and temple, and the importance of *order* in worship is suggested for our consideration.

I. SUCH ORDERLINESS SECURES DUE PREPARATION. Anything like *hurry* is unsuitable in connection with Divine worship and work. Each man should know beforehand his place. “Hands should be laid on no man suddenly.” Seriousness, quietness, and thoughtfulness are proper in the house of God. Now men need to “sanctify themselves” by meditation and prayer before going to the temple, just as the old priests and Levites did.

II. SUCH ORDERLINESS AIDS THE DEVOTION OF THE WORSHIPPERS. Stillness and regular occupations that do not call off the attention or disturb meditation are important helps to worshippers. Remember Keble’s lines on the sacramental season—

“Sweet awful hour! the only sound
One gentle footstep gliding round,
Offering by turns on Jesus’ part
The cross to every hand and heart.”

III. SUCH ORDERLINESS GIVES EIGHT TONE TO WORSHIP. Show here how distinct the idea of *worship* is from mere sermon-hearing, or mere receiving of religious instruction,

or exciting of religious feeling. Worship should take us wholly out of the self-sphere, and set us in the God-sphere. And order, quiet, the beautiful in form and expression, are important associations of worship. Illustrate by the way in which our feelings are toned on entering the cathedral or sharing in stately cathedral service. No section of Christian people can safely neglect this element of orderliness; and each Christian worshipper should personally and anxiously aid in its maintenance. Here some of the forms in which modern worship fails may be dealt with: these will differ as apprehended by members of the different religious communities. "Order is Heaven's first law." Order is man's witness for God, who rules and tones all things. Order may be the characteristic feature of all worship, whatever may be its form—whether it be severe as the Puritanic, or artistic as the Roman Catholic. Illustrate by the moral influence exerted by the well-ordered home, and its relation to the comfort, peace, and good culture of the family.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—Separation and consecration. Aaron was *separated* in order that he might be *consecrated* to the "sanctifying of the most holy things" (see Exod. xxviii.). All of us should be *consecrated*, but some of us may be also *called* and *separated* unto some special service. Expressing the consecrated separateness of Christian believers, St. Peter says, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii. 5).

I. THE DIVINE REQUIREMENT OF CHARACTER. Personal holiness and the refined culture of all faculty and virtue are necessary if we would serve God in any sphere. It should be distinctly apprehended that God calls to his service not *men's powers*, but *men with their powers*, and so a man's *character* God wants consecrated for him and to him.

II. THE DIVINE ELECTION TO SERVICE. Much of the difficulty felt concerning God's *election* has arisen from our fixing attention on election to *privilege*, and setting in quite the background election to *service*. But God puts first "election to service," and bases such election on the known fitness of particular men for particular work. The attendant "privilege" is little more than the accident attending on, or the reward given to, faithful service. Aaron was honoured by his place and sphere of work.

III. THE DIVINE SEPARATION TO PARTICULAR SERVICE. God condescends to the minutest things, and fits his people for the smallest places. We easily recognize the Divine call of men upon *emergencies*, and the special call of the men of genius in every age; but we should feel that every one of us, in the family, the Church, and the world, is called of God, and separated unto his particular work; and "every man, wherein he is called, should therein abide with God."

IV. THE RELATION OF ALL SEPARATED ONES TO THE WHOLE. Each, in his separated sphere, is to become an example, and so a sanctifying power, upon the rest. There is a tendency in us all to feel the force of an example shown in some *other sphere* than our own, and in this way each one of us exerts a real influence on the whole. Aaron pleaded by his example for the sanctified life of every Israelite. Common consecration to God, and openness to yield to all Divine calls and separations, are the secrets of deliverance from all jealousies and envies.—R. T.

Ver. 24.—Work that young people may do. The time of Levitical service dated from the age of thirty, but service of particular kinds was accepted from those as young as twenty. Some things are beyond the young people. They could not do them well. They require gifts and maturity which the young do not possess. It is well for them to learn what is within their reach—what they may do, and what they may not do.

I. YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD ACCEPT THE FACT OF THEIR LIMITED POWER AND LIMITED FITNESS. This would check their characteristic disposition to over self-confidence.

II. YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD ESTIMATE FAIRLY THE MEASURE OF THEIR POWER, and so work up to their highest limit. St. John gives his advice to young men "because they are strong."

III. YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD HOLD ALL THEIR POWERS AT GOD'S SERVICE, seeing that he asks for life's morning as well as life's noon tide.

IV. YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE SURE THAT THERE ARE SPHERES OF SERVICE EXACTLY MATCHING THEIR POWERS. And they should be watching, ever ready to enter upon all such.

In the faithful doing of the least things of our youth-time alone lies our hope of training for the undertaking of more and better work as manly powers unfold. Show that the noblest of God's workers have consecrated their youth-time to his service.—R. T.

Ver. 30.—*The mission of those who praise.* Some were to “stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at even.” This was the special work of certain of the younger Levites, whose voices retained their tone and power. They formed a *choir* to aid in the interest and beauty of Divine service. As this subject has been somewhat fully dealt with in previous outline homilies, we do but suggest a new framework, which the earlier materials will enable the reader to clothe. Deal with the mission of church choirs and singing bands, and show—

I. THEIR MISSION TO GIVE EXPRESSION TO OTHERS' FEELINGS, and to strengthen them by expression.

II. THEIR MISSION TO INTEREST OTHERS IN DIVINE THINGS.

III. THEIR MISSION IN AROUSING OTHERS TO RELIGIOUS ANXIETY, as with the singing of revival hymns.

Then press the importance of cultured *spiritual* fitness for the efficient fulfilment of this mission. They who sing for the religious helping and teaching of men must themselves be sincere, devout, earnest, and pious. It is as true of this as of any other form of Christian service, that “we can only kindle fire when we are ourselves on fire.” “In order to the high result intended, the music of religion must be religious. There must be a distinction of sounds. As this language is given for the heart, it becomes a first principle that it must be of the heart, else it is an unknown tongue. And so true is this, that nothing can really fulfil the idea of religious music which is not the breathing of true love and worship. Even instruments without life will not speak the true notes of power unless the touch of faith is on them, and the breath of holy feeling is in them; how much less the voice itself, whose very qualities of sound are inevitably toned by the secret feeling of the spirit?” (Dr. Horace Bushnell).—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Vers. 1-19.—*The twenty-four classes of priests.*

Ver. 1.—The Hebrew of this verse reads, *And to the sons of Aaron, their divisions נְדָבָן וְאַבִּihu;* the sons of Aaron: Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. The word “divisions” is the same word that is translated “courses” in ver. 6, and which verse also would read literally, “And David divided them divisions to the sons of Levi, to Gershom, Kohath, and Merari.” Our present verse evidently continues both the subject and construction of that verse. Of the four sons (Exod. vi. 23), two died without issue, viz. Nadab and Abihu (ver. 2); and the other two have to supply the “chief men of the house,” viz. Eleazar *sixteen*, and Ithamar *eight* (ver. 4).

Ver. 2.—(Comp. Lev. x. 1, 2, for the death of these; and for their being childless, Numb. iii. 2-4; xxvi. 60, 61.)

Ver. 3.—The Hebrew of this verse reads, *And David divided them, and Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices נְדָבָן וְאַבִּihu;*

in their service (נְדָבָן וְאַבִּihu). And the evident purport of it is that the three, David, Zadok, and Ahimelech, conjointly made the arrangements. This is virtually repeated in vers. 6, 31 (see also ch. xxv. 1 for an analogous case). For the “Ahimelech” of this verse and vers. 6, 31, should be read “Abiathar,” as shown in ch. xviii. 16, by comparison of 1 Sam. xxii. 20; 2 Sam. xx. 25; 1 Kings i. 7, 8; Mark ii. 26.

Ver. 4.—The simpler translation of this verse might run thus: And there were found (of) sons of Eleazar, more for chief men, than (of) sons of Ithamar, and they divided them—*to* sons of Eleazar, sixteen chiefs of fathers' houses; and to sons of Ithamar, eight.

Ver. 5.—Translate, And they divided them by lots, these with those; i.e. as there was no ground of choice between the two families, which differed only in number, and as the highest ecclesiastical places had been filled already by both of them, the impartiality of the “lot” was resorted to, for the settling of the order in which they would take the services now in question (ch. xxv. 8). The governors; read rather, *the princes.* The distinction intended between “the holy princes,” or “princes of the sanctuary,” on

the one hand, and "the princes of God" on the other, is not very clear. One instance of the former expression is found in Isa. xlvi. 28. Keil supposes there may be no distinction between them, but adds that if there is, he would take the "princes of God" to stand for the regular high priests exclusively, viz. those who could enter into the most holy place before God. The "princes of God" is a title evidently illustrated by the word "Israel" (Gen. xxxii. 28).

Ver. 6.—The person who acted as clerk or secretary on the occasion, and the whole number of the witnesses, and the lot-taking itself, are here given. The present Hebrew text repeats the word **לְנָ** (taken) twice, before the name of Ithamar, at the end of the sentence. The evident and easy correction of the first occurrence of which into **לְנָ** (one) will make the clause and sense correspond with what goes before. Bertheau, however, and Keil, and some others do not accept this correction, and would keep the present Hebrew text, the first-named, moreover, contending that the repetition of the word for "taking" points to two lots being represented by each house of Ithamar, whose total number was only eight, for one of Elazar, whose total was sixteen. Not only does the repetition of the present Hebrew text not avail to authorize such a supposition, but the supposition itself would be unsupported and gratuitous. What is really told us amounts to this only, that the drawing was first from the collection of families under the name of Eleazar, and then from that descended from Ithamar. For anything we are here told, the urn of Ithamar can have held out only half as long as that of Eleazar, and it can be only conjecture to suppose that two lots were drawn from the urn of Eleazar for every one from that of Ithamar, so as to make them run out together at the end. Could any one of the names from sixteen to twenty-four that are recorded in this chapter as "coming forth" in the shape of a "lot," be identified as belonging to families descended from Ithamar, the question might be solved. Ahimelech the son of Abiathar; read, as above, ver. 3, ch. xviii. 16, etc., **Abiathar the son of Ahimelech**.

Ver. 7.—**Jehoiarib**. Written thus only here and in ch. ix. 10; elsewhere always **Joiarib**. He then is the head of the first of the twenty-four courses of priests in David's time, and according to his plan. (For the evidence of the return of some of this family from the Exile, see Neh. xi. 10, though the text of this clause is very suspicious; xii. 6, 19; see also interesting article under this name, with tables, Smith, "Bible Dictionary," i. 946.) **Jedaiah**. (For

the return of some of the descendants of this family, see Ezra ii. 36; Neh. vii. 39; comp. also Neh. xii. 6, 7, 19, 21.)

Ver. 8.—**Harim** (see Barrington's "Genealogies," i. 94, 99, 151, 169—see also for the mention of descendants, Ezra ii. 39; x. 21; Neh. vii. 42; x. 5; xii. 4 (where the name appears as *Rehum*), 15). The sons of Harim mentioned in Ezra ii. 32; x. 31; Neh. vii. 35; x. 27, were not a priest-family. Seorim. This name does not occur again.

Ver. 9.—**Malchijah**. An earlier priest of this same name is mentioned in ch. ix. 12, who is again mentioned in Neh. xi. 12; Jer. xxi. 1; xxxviii. 1. The name in our present verse is probably the same (but used to mark a family and not the individual) as that found in Neh. x. 3 (see also Neh. xii. 42). The *Malchijah* of Neh. iii. 11 and Ezra x. 25 is the name of an Israelitish layman, *Mijamin*. In like manner, this as a *family* name reappears in Neh. x. 7; xii. 5 (in the form *Miamin*), 17, 41 (in the form *Miniamin*); see also 2 Chron. xxxi. 15, where the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Peshito Syriac read *Benjamin*. The name as of a layman also appears in Ezra x. 25.

Ver. 10.—**Hakkoz**. The first half of this word is the definite article, as may be seen in Neh. iii. 4, 21 and Ezra ii. 61, where the name is found, as in the cases above, for the priest-family. **Abijah** (see again Neh. x. 7; Luke i. 5). To this course, therefore, **Zacharias**, father of John the Baptist, belonged.

Ver. 11.—**Jeshuah**. In Ezra ii. 36 and Neh. vii. 39 certain "children of Jedaiah," who returned from Babylon, are mentioned as belonging to the "house of Jeshua," and distinguished presumably thereby from children of another Jedaiah. This accords with the fact that in Neh. xii. 6, 7, and again in 19, 21, two families of the name Jedaiah are given in the priest-lists. We may, therefore, conclude that families descended from the Jeshuah of our present verse were among those who returned from captivity (Ezra ii. 36; Neh. vii. 39). **Shecaniah** (see Neh. xii. 3, where spelt *Shechaniah*). Of those similarly named in Ezra viii. 3, 5, the former may possibly have been descendants of this Shecaniah, the latter not so.

Ver. 12.—**Eliashib**. Not the progenitor of the Eliashib of Neh. iii. 1, 20, 21; for see ch. xii. 10, 22, 23, for the pedigree of the latter. **Jakim**. This name does not reappear.

Ver. 13.—**Huppah** . . . **Jeshebeab**. The former of these names is not found again among priest-names, and the latter not at all.

Ver. 14.—**Bilgah** . . . **Immer**. The former name reappears, not for the same person, in Neh. xii. 5, 18; and, under a slightly

altered form, *Bilgat*, in Neh. x. 8. The latter is the name of a family known already (ch. ix. 12), and which became much better known (Ezra ii. 37; x. 20; Neh. iii. 29; vii. 40; xi. 13; Jer. xx. 1). The notices parallel to one another (Ezra ii. 59; Neh. vii. 61) are interesting, but obscure. They probably speak of a *place* called Immer, but even this is not quite clear.

Ver. 15.—*Hezir . . . Aphses*. The former name, as that of a layman, is found again in Neh. x. 20. Of the latter, spelt in the Hebrew *Hapizez*, nothing more is known.

Ver. 16.—*Pethahiah . . . Jehezekel*. The former name reappears as one of those who separated themselves from the alliances they had contracted in the land of their captivity (Ezra x. 23; Neh. ix. 5). The latter is in its characters (בְּנֵי־צְקָנָה) the same with those of Ezekiel, though here Englished *Jehezekel*!

Ver. 17.—*Jachin . . . Gamul*. The latter of these names is not found again in any connection with a priest-family. Of the former we read as well in ch. ix. 10 as in Neh. xi. 10, and probably he is the *Achim* of Matt. i. 14.

Ver. 18.—*Delaiah . . . Maaziah*. The spelling of the former of these names, as it appears here and in Jer. xxxvi. 12, 25, differs by the addition of a *shurek* (שׁ) from the name, spelt the same in the English Version, found in ch. iii. 24; Neh. vi. 10; vii. 62; Ezra ii. 60. The latter name recurs in Neh. x. 8, etc., though without a final *shurek*.

Ver. 19.—The order has been thus given of the twenty-four classes or courses of the priests. Each course served a week from the seventh day to the seventh (2 Kings xi. 9; 2 Chron. xxiii. 8). An interesting allusion to this order of courses is tacitly made in Ezek. viii. 16-18, where the twenty-fifth idolater may be supposed to be the high priest. Some have, on very insufficient grounds, supposed that this "ordering" of courses was not really the institution of David, but attributed to him after the Exile for the sake of the authority of his name. In Neh. xii. 1-7, moreover, the names do not appear as even twenty-four, but twenty-two—deficient by two!—a thing most easily to be accounted for. In addition to the direct scriptural witness on this subject, Josephus's ('Ant.' vii. 14) testimony confirms the account of our present chapter, while Movers (in 'Chronik,' 279) and Dehler (in Herzog's 'R. E.' xii. 185) effectively combat the positions of De Wette and Gramberg, and of Herzberg, in his 'History of the People of Israel.'

Vers. 20-31.—*The distribution of the other Levites*.

Ver. 20.—The rest of the sons of Levi designated here are explained sufficiently clearly by ver. 30. They were those who were not of the sons of Aaron, not priests, but whose "office was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the Lord" (ch. xxiii. 28), for certain specified work, some of which was of the more menial character. These, of course, do not exhaust the whole of the non-priestly Levites; for we read distinctly in the following two chapters of other detachments of the non-priestly Levites, whose office was as singers, doorkeepers, and treasure-keepers. And this consideration may of itself possibly be a sufficient account of the absence of any of the family of Gershonites in the list of the present chapter, though they do appear to view for other work in ch. xxvi. 21, etc. *Amram . . . Shubael*. The latter of these two names marks the line of Moses, in his elder son, Gershom, whose son was Shebuel (ch. xxiii. 15, 16), as the former is the name of the father of Moses, and *eldest* son of Kohath.

Ver. 21.—*Rehabiah*. This name marks the line of Moses, in the person of his younger son, Eliezer, father of Rehabiah. And the practical result of these two verses is to give us the two "chiefs," or heads, or representatives, *Jehdeiah* and *Isshiah*, both Amramites.

Ver. 22.—*Jahath*. Here follows in order after the Amramites, *Jahath*, a descendant from Izhar, Kohath's second son (ch. xxiii. 12, 18), through Shelomoth (otherwise Shelomith). This *Jahath* furnishes for us the third name of this series of "other sons of Levi." And Keil plausibly argues, from the absence of these three names from the list of ch. xxiii. 6-23, that, while that list is occupied with fathers' houses, this list is occupied with the official classes of the Levites who were to be engaged in the way already stated.

Ver. 23.—This verse is manifestly imperfect. What is necessary to fill up the evident gaps is to be found, however, in ch. xxiii. 19; also the pointed allusion to the time of David, in ch. xxvi. 31, is deserving of especial notice. The four names of this verse, then, are descendants of Kohath's third son, *Hebron* (ch. xxiii. 12).

Vers. 24, 25.—These verses give us *Shamir* and *Zechariah*, descendants of *Uzziel*, Kohath's fourth son (ch. xxiii. 12), the former through *Michah* (ch. xxiii. 20), and the latter through *Michah*'s brother, *Isshiah* (ch. xxiii. 20), called here "sons of *Uzziel*," but presumably not intended for immediate sons (Exod. vi. 22). In all these fourteen heads were drawn from the four sons of Kohath.

Vers. 26—29.—We now pass from the Kohath family to that of Merari. For the oft-repeated *Mahli* and *Mushi* they belonged to the time of Moses (Exod. vi. 19; Numb. iii. 33). The elder of these, *Mahli*, as already seen in ch. xxiii. 21, 22, had two sons, Eleazar and Kish, the sons of the latter of whom took the daughters of Eleazar, who had no sons, and thus kept only one house surviving, the head of which was (ver. 29) Jerahmeel. This would seem to complete all that needs to be said of the *Mahli* line. Meantime, however, we are confronted by the contents of the latter half of our ver. 26 and ver. 27. These purport to give, amid some confusion of expression, sons of Merari by Jaaziah his son (*Beno*). No anterior authority, however, can be found for this *Jaaziah*. Neither of him nor of any of the three names (omitting *Beno*, which is evidently to be translated "his son") here linked on to his, is anything known. While we accept the text as it at present is, we have an additional branch with three families to add to the account of Merari—the branch of *Jaaziah*, the three families of *Shoham*, *Zaccur*, *Ibri*. Even so we have in ver. 27 to obliterate arbitrarily the conjunction *vau*, prefixed to the name *Shoham*. Under these circumstances, Keil impatiently rejects these clauses altogether, as an interpolation, though one of which he can give no account, and adds up, in consequence, the families of Levi (exclusive of the priests) to twenty-two instead of the unexplained

twenty-five of the present text. On the other hand, Bertheau retains the present reading, and accepts *Jaaziah* as a third branch of the family of Merari. If this were so, it is surprising that nowhere else is room found for the slightest mention of *Jaaziah*, nor any other mention of these supposed descendants.

Ver. 30.—The three sons of *Mushi* here given agree with ch. xxiii. 23. It is to be observed that, in the foregoing verses, we have no expressed sum of the families or heads to which they add up. Hence Bertheau finds twenty-five in all, which he would reduce to the twenty-four he wants by omitting, without any adequate justification, the *Mahli* of ver. 30. Others, omitting the three names of *Shoham*, *Zaccur*, *Ibri*, bring the twenty-five to twenty-two. Keil finds only fifteen "heads" or "classes," but surmises that the *Hebronite* and *Mushite* "fathers' houses" may have been numerous enough to find more than one "class;" and thereby to make up the twenty-four classes which he desires as well for symmetry's sake as for the patent suggestions of ver. 31.

Ver. 31.—*Over against . . . over against.* This translation of the Hebrew (*מֵעַל*) is obscure and awkward. The meaning is "equally with," or "correspondingly with" (ch. xxvi. 12, 16, etc.). The root means "communion," and the word is found only in the constructive state. The Vulgate shows the translation, *Omnes sors e qualiter dividebat; tam maiores quam minores.*

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—*Principles in a parenthesis.* This verse is parenthetical; we may let it suggest to us some valuable principles.

I. THAT SIN REAPPEARS IN ITS EFFECTS, BOTH IN LIFE AND IN HISTORY. After the full statement of the sin committed by these young men (Lev. x.), and the allusion made to it in the Book of Numbers (iii. 4), we might have supposed that we had heard the last of it in the sacred narrative. But here it comes up again; once more we are reminded how Aaron's sons provoked the Lord, and brought down his displeasure. So now are there sins against God and crimes against men which history will not let alone; it records them on its page, and, further on, it writes them down again, that the attention of another generation may be called thereto. Some iniquities there are which are of such significance that no writer of his country's story will leave them out of his record. But this is as pathetically true of individual life. Too often it happens that men cannot shake themselves free from the sins of earlier days. They think they have done with them, but some way further on they present themselves again, and look them in the face. How many a man is called upon to say, again and again, as the miserable effects of past sin come up to reproach, or to enfeeble, or to baulk him, "Ah! that that word had been left unspoken, that deed undone, that habit unformed, that course unchosen!" If such is sin in its resurgent powers, (1) what a compensatory fact we have in the truth that it may be wholly forgiven by the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, so that it does not continue to interpose between our souls and his Divine favour! and (2) how wise to bring our life at its very commencement under the law

of holiness, so that those sins may be avoided which would, if incurred, dog our steps and haunt our spirits!

II. THAT SIN INVERTS THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS IN THE LIFE OF MAN. So far as the word can be used appropriately in such a case, we may say that it is the natural thing for the sons to close the eyes of their father (see Gen. xlvi. 4), to carry him to the grave, to cherish his memory, to follow his last directions. There is something strikingly unnatural when it has to be written that "they died before their father." But it is the constant consequence of sin. Sin is the great overturning, confusing, inverting power in the world; putting that before which should be behind, and that below which should be above, disordering and disarranging everything in the world which God made beautiful and blessed. Illustrations abound in every sphere of human activity.

III. THAT SIN CUTS OFF THE GOOD WHICH IT IS IN GOD'S THOUGHT TO GIVE US. These young men died, and "had no children." In the common course of providence they would have had the deep, full joy of parents, and their children and descendants would have carried down their lineage to the distant future. But that one "presumptuous sin" cut all this off. In how many ways does human guilt shut the hand of beneficence, impoverishing itself and all whom it can affect!

IV. THAT IT IS WISE TO BE PREPARED FOR EARLY DEATH OR FOR LONELY AGE. These words may be written of those who are not sinful but unfortunate. In the families of the holy and the faithful it is often the painful record—the young men, the young women, "die before their parents." No one who is wise will risk anything on the assurance of continued life. Youth in all its vigour may be but a step or two distant from the grave. Strong manhood, rejoicing motherhood, may be about to enter on a life of clouded loneliness. Be ready for early death, and for the long dark shadow of bereavement.—C.

V. 19.—*The will of the Lord.* "As the Lord God of Israel had commanded him." These words may be said to constitute the key-note of the whole Law (Exod. xxxix. 42; Lev. xxvii. 34; Numb. xxxvi. 13; Deut. xxxiv. 9). Just as Israel should pay heed to this commandment of Jehovah, so it would flourish and rejoice; in proportion as it should depart from these commandments, so it would fail and be distressed. Everything hung on a loyal obedience to the Divine will. There were three forms of obedience then, and there is the same number now. We look at both.

I. THE THREE FORMS OF OBEDIENCE WHICH ISRAEL WAS TO RENDER. 1. Minute conformity to positive precept. Everything, to the smallest particular, was to be "after the pattern" (Exod. xxv. 9, 40; Numb. viii. 4). In the celebration of the sacrifices, the priests were to be studious to follow the exact directions given in the "commandment of the Lord," and any deviation, though but slight and apparently immaterial in itself, would vitiate everything that was done. 2. Application of broad principles. It was hopeless to anticipate every possible breach of such laws as, "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour," "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." An interpretation and application of such commandments as these must have been left largely to the individual conscience. 3. Inquiry of the Lord to know his will, and so to do it. This was the case, like that recorded in this chapter, whenever the mind of God was taken by means of the lot (vers. 5, 6). A direct appeal was then made to him for his direction, and, thus gained, it was followed.

II. THE FORMS OF OBEDIENCE TO WHICH OUR LORD IS SUMMONING US. They correspond to the preceding, yet differ in some respects from them. 1. Christ has left us but few positive enactments. We seldom meet with any minute prescriptions regulating behaviour in our New Testament. Days, forms, and methods of devotion and service are left to our conscience and judgment. But there are some interdictions and requirements which still exist, and which bind us to the obedience of conformity to statute. 2. Christ requires of us that we make constant application of the broad principles he has taught us. He has said to us, "Love me: Follow me: Care for my friends and little ones: Walk in love, in humility, in purity: Do good and communicate," etc.; and he leaves it to those who bear his Name to apply and illustrate these his general commandments, in all the details of their individual, family, Church, national life. The man or the Church that does not try to find out the will of Christ from his life and his

words, and to do that will when thus discovered, is “not worthy of him,” is no true friend of his (John xv. 14). 3. Christ desires us to be continually seeking his will from his own Divine Spirit. He has promised to come to us, to dwell with us and within us, to instruct and inspire us by the communications of the Spirit of God. We are thus to learn his will, and, when thus directed, are to do what is right and pleasing in his sight. So far is the life of Christian obedience from being one that is merely formal and mechanical. In Christ Jesus the statutes are few; the application of heavenly principles is our daily duty; the inquiry of the Lord to know what he would have us do is our high privilege and our abiding obligation.—C.

Ch. xxiv., xxv.—*The Aaronites and other descendants of Levi: orders of the musicians.* In these chapters we have brought before us a catalogue of the Aaronites, or priests, who were divided into twenty-four classes, corresponding to the sons of Eleazar and Ithamar, and appointed to perform the service in succession as determined by lot, prominent notice being given to the heads of these twenty-four classes; and a list of the fathers' houses of the other descendants of Levi, in the order of succession, also settled by lot. In ch. xxv. we see the list of twenty-four orders of musicians in the order determined by lot. The lot was a *direct appeal to God*, and by it all cases were decided. It is for this reason that all *chance* games are wrong, and should never be encouraged by the Christian. It is bringing down holy ordinance to a profane level, and is, without doubt, a breach of the third commandment. The expression “prophesied,” which occurs in ch. xxv. 2, 3, is used in its deeper signification of singing and playing to the praise of God, in the power of the Spirit of God. In ch. xxv. 5 Heman is called “the *seer* of the king in the *words of God*,” because along with his gift of song he was endowed with the prophetic gift, and thus made known to the king revelations of God. The expression “to lift up the horn” in this verse also needs explanation. The Levites did not blow horns. It was not one of the instruments of worship. The lifting up of the horn signifies invariably to heighten or show forth the power of any one. This is the meaning of the word in this passage. And the words “to lift up the horn” must be connected with the words that follow, thus: “To give Heman's race power for the praise of God God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. We also learn, in ch. xxv. 7, that there were those who were “instructed,” and were “cunning” or skilful in the songs of the Lord. From these passages we may learn that families, and especially large families like Heman's, are God's gifts for the purpose of being used in his service. And secondly, that in all praise and singing, whilst we are never to forget the apostolic injunction, “Singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord,” we are to “sing with the understanding also,” and that it is to be of the *very best* kind; and that with it all there must be that without which it will be empty sound—singing *in the Holy Ghost*, as they did who are named in the second and third verses of ch. xxv. Thus “teachers” and “scholars” (ver. 8) will fill their divinely appointed places to the glory of God.—W.

Ver. 2.—*The abiding warning of the wilful.* The narrative of Nadab and Abihu which is here recalled is given in Lev. x. 1—5. The wording of the verse is taken from Numb. iii. 4. It is a story which we find it difficult to understand. Probably its explanation depends on an intimate acquaintance with the Jewish system, and the sentiments prevailing in those earlier times. Nadab and Abihu had been honoured with special privileges (see Exod. xxiv. 1, 9, 10); by reason of this they may have become unduly exalted, and have been tempted by spiritual pride to imagine that they were not bound by ordinary rules in the discharge of the duties of the priest's office. Kitto gives a brief but sufficient sketch of the incident. “Among the priestly services was that of offering the precious incense upon the golden altar within the tabernacle, at the very time that the daily sacrifice was being consumed upon the brazen altar in the court without. At the time the ritual service had been inaugurated, the fire of the great altar was kindled from heaven; and it was made an ordinance that this holy fire should always be kept up and preserved, and that this, and this alone, was to be used in all the sacred services. The priests who offered incense had, therefore, to fill their censers with fire from the great altar when they went into the tabernacle to burn incense. It was in this matter that Nadab and Abihu sinned. Treating this ordinance

as of no importance, thinking to themselves that common fire would burn their incense quite as well as the other; or, perhaps, as there is reason to fear, having been led into a mistake, or neglect, by inebriety, they filled their censers with "strange fire, unhallowed fire, not from the altar, and ventured to bring it into the tabernacle." Permanent instruction may be drawn from this incident by regarding *wilfulness* as the very essence of these men's sin. When there was a distinct, definite, and well-known Divine command, it pleased them to act on the dictate of their own feeling. In view of that full loyalty to Christ, and daily waiting upon him for guidance and direction, which are necessary features of the Christian life, *wilfulness* is as perilous and as wicked in the modern dispensation as in the older. In setting forth this evil and its fatal influence, consider—

I. **WILFULNESS AS A DISPOSITION OF CHARACTER.** It is the bias left on humanity from our first father's fall. We see the signs of human depravity mainly in this—that men's wills are set against God's will, and have to be subdued to his obedience. This is true of man as an individual, and equally true of men when acting together in society or in the nation. But there are different degrees of wilfulness, and in some the self-will is a master-passion. Some measures of wilfulness in the common affairs of life ensure energy and mastery of circumstance; but it is wholly out of place in the religious spheres, where energy must depend on the spirit of service to Christ.

II. **WILFULNESS FINDING EXPRESSION IN ACTS.** Illustrate from King Saul in his later and worse moods, or from Judas Iscariot, who, with views of his own, came to betray his very Lord. The apostle warns us concerning those who "will be rich, and so fall into temptation and a snare." Wilfulness expressed in acts brings us at once under Divine notice, because it then affects the comfort and well-being of *others*.

III. **WILFULNESS CORRUPTING THE WHOLE RELIGIOUS LIFE.** It puts a wrong *tone* upon all the relations, and spoils the whole life by possessing it with the spirit of *self*. *God the Spirit* cannot rule the life, and *self rule* at the same time; and if it be self that really rules, then we are "dead while we live." Practically dead, because none of the "means of grace" can prove the soul's nourishment when wilfulness rules.

IV. **WILFULNESS BRINGING US UNDER DIVINE JUDGMENTS.** Illustrated in the case of Nadab and Abihu. Where wilfulness is but growing, Divine *chastisements* come for correction. Where wilfulness has gained full mastery, there must be Divine judgments, such as utterly crush down the pride.

Exactly what Christianity proposes is the "conversion of self-will," and the bestowment of the spirit that worships, and follows wholly, the "sweet will" of God.—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*Ancient Divine rules preserved in modern adjustments.* David found it necessary to make alterations and adaptations when he reconstituted the worship for the new tabernacle and the anticipated temple, but in all his adaptations he anxiously preserved the Mosaic principles and the Mosaic order; thereby giving an important example of the spirit and the manner in which modern adjustments of permanent principles should be made. We must accept the fact of the changeableness of human life, thought, and forms of relationship and society. Age differs from age. A succeeding age will often strive to realize a *contrast* with the age preceding; it will prefer what it disliked, and put in the front what it had set in the background. We must take care that the changes are set under wise limitations, and the first of these is the fair and adequate representation, in the new scenes, of the old and permanent social, or moral, or religious principles. Some persons love change for change's sake; and such persons often put the best things in peril, and prevent the noblest schemes for human well-being from gaining an adequate trial. Others resist change as if it were wholly wrong and injurious; and such persons help to keep the yokes pressing on men's necks long after it is manifest how the neck has become galled and painful. And many persons fail to take "change" at the hopeful time, and so they lose all the finest opportunities that life brings. These diversities of relation to necessary change may be illustrated in relation to human customs, to political history, to ecclesiastical order, and to Church doctrine. We are instructed not to "meddle with those who are given to change;" but we have a very proper admiration for such a man as the Apostle St. Paul, who, with far-seeing wisdom, discerned how Judaism was passing into the broader spiritual Christianity, and put himself forward as a leader in the change. Another fact

requires attention. All *forms* for the expression of principles tend to exhaust their capacity for expressing truth. Like vessels, or pipes, that get encrusted with use, they have to be taken away, and replaced by other and larger forms. All we have to care for, from the most conservative standpoint, is that the old life shall flow into and through the new forms, and that the new form shall be fully adequate to convey the great flow of the old life. We may even plead that, in view of the ever-varying wants of men, we should be ready to adopt new forms and modes in the religious life and service. Illustration may be taken from the attitude advisable towards such schemes as that of the Salvation Army, or modern mission halls and revivals. David lived in one of the so-called "periods of transition," and it is very interesting to mark how he led the change that was demanded, but carefully toned it with due reference to the rules and order which had been divinely given. We may more fully illustrate from practices and order of worship, customs of religious life, and Church doctrine, one necessary condition of change that may be regarded as wise and healthy—*the old rule, or principle, must find adequate expression in the new form*. The form is bad if it dwarfs, or hides, or misrepresents, or attenuates the principle. The *body* must worthily and sufficiently express the *man*. If it be so that men ever gain a larger and fuller grasp of any principle or truth, they are following a genuine inspiration when they seek a larger form in which to give it expression. And this condition, duly observed, guarantees the safety of what is called "modern religious thought." This subject may be used to quiet the minds of those who fear the many and apparently extensive changes in the expression of religious truth in our times. We may be sure that God will watch jealously over *his* truth; and will have, in every age, godly men who will "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXV.

Vers. 1-8.—*The families of the three chiefs in song.*

Ver. 1.—The twenty-four courses of those who were to be engaged in the temple service as singers and musicians fill up this chapter. They are to be taken from the three great families of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun. For the captains of the host, as designating those who superintended the order of temple worship, see ch. xxii. 17; xxiii. 2; xxiv. 6; as also Numb. iv. 3; viii. 23. The sons of Asaph. (For a clear instance of the use of the preposition (*lamed*) prefixed, as here, see Ezra viii. 24.) The English should appear "the sons of Asaph." Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun belonged respectively to the Gershon, Kohath, and Merarite families (ch. vi. 18-32). Thus these singers and musicians were drawn from each great branch of Levi; viz. from Gershon, four through Asaph; from Kohath, six through Jeduthun; and from Merari, fourteen through Heman; while the whole number of those trained to sing was two hundred and eighty-eight. Who should prophesy. The Hebrew נִפְלָאָה (Jer. xiv. 14, 16) stands for Niphal participle plural, the singular of which (*נִפְלָאָה*) appears in the following two verses. These were the utters in song of the Divine mind and

will. The essential meaning of the expression evidently is to use the voice in sacred service, more or less under Divine impulse. With cymbals. These instruments were used to regulate the time (compare this verse with ch. xiii. 8). For some particulars respecting these and other musical instruments used in Israel at this time, the article "Music" in Smith's "Bible Dictionary" may be consulted with advantage. And the number, etc. The literal translation of the last clause of this verse is, *And was their number, the men of work, for their service*, i.e. "And the number of workmen for the service was." The *workmen* intend, of course, those who performed the service.

Ver. 2.—Four sons of Asaph are here given, the number, however, not being expressed, although it is expressed in the cases of Jeduthun and Heman (vers. 3, 5). "For Asaph," we find twelve psalms inscribed, viz. Ps. 1.; lxxiii.—lxxxii.; of some of which he was himself the inspired composer. When it is said "for Asaph," the meaning is for those "under his hand," or direction, and who as a band bore his name, and performed among other odes those which he prophesied. Zaccur. A descendant after the Return is mentioned in Neh. xii. 35. Asarelah. This last of the four sons of Asaph is called in ver. 14, Jesharelah. Under the hands of . . . accord-

ing to the order of. The Hebrew words are “to the hand of” and “to the hands of.” Between the signification of these two forms, the one expressel in the singular number and the other in the plural, there does not seem to be any distinction, and accordingly they might be better translated, *under the direction of . . . under the directions of*. The latter form is that found in vers. 3, 6.

Ver. 3.—Six sons are here said to be under the direction of Jeduthun (or Ethan, ch. vi. 44). The name missing is Shimei, supplied by ver. 17, and which the Alexandrine Septuagint places fourth in this list. This is clear from the list of vers. 9—31, which contains all the same names as are found in the present vers. 2—4, and one more, Shimei, which therefore offers to supply the place vacant here. The name Zeri reappears in ver. 11 as Izri. Who prophesied (see headings to Ps. xxxix.; lxii.; lxxvii.) we do not know, however, that Jeduthun composed any of these, nor does the word “prophesy” necessitate it.

Ver. 4.—The two names Uzziel and Shebuel, in this verse, reappear respectively in vers. 18, 20, as *Azareel* and *Shubael*. It is remarkable that the ninth and tenth names of this list, with the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth, when put together, run into two lines of verse, which may be translated, “These bestowed great and high help; I have abundantly uttered oracles.” Ewald suggests that these may be the commencing lines of some ancient prophet’s oracles (Ewald, “Lehrbuch der H. Spr.” § 274, S. 672, 7th edit., cited by Keil).

Ver. 5.—For the expression, the king’s seer, and as other instances of the office, see ch. xxi. 9; 2 Chron. xxxv. 15, in neither of which places, however, have we the attendant phrase, in the words of God. Yet we have the same sense strictly implied in ch. xxi. 9, 19. The expression needs not to be generalized into “in the matters of God,” but evidently describes the seer (Heman, Gad, or Jeduthun) as the authorized medium of verbal communication between God and the king. There is difficulty in assigning the right place of the clause, to lift up the horn. There can be no doubt at all that it contains no allusion whatever to the horn as an instrument of sound (the almost solitary approach to which use of the word is found in Josh. vi. 5), but that it falls in with the very frequent *figurative* use of the phrase as it occurs in the very same words (Ps. lxxv. 5, 6; lxxxix. 18, 25; xcii. 12; cxii. 9; 1 Sam. ii. 1, 10, etc.), and which means “to add to the strength” or “honour” of any one. The allusion is to the number of Heman’s children being a mark of the honour God set on him. The words cannot

go with the latter part of the verse, while the conjunction (*vau*) in *וְ* opens it. The possible order may be, *All these sons were to Heman, the king’s seer, by the words of God, to lift up the horn.* The absence of the third personal pronoun suffix to *וְ* is noticeable, place the clause where we will. The statement of the fourteen sons and three daughters belonging to Heman, in this verse, shows that up to this point the word “sons” is used in its stricter sense, however true it may be that the sense is amplified in vers. 10—31.

Ver. 6.—This verse needs nothing except exact translation to make its meaning clear and consistent, All these (i.e. the names of vers. 2—4) were under the directions of their father, in the song of the house of the Lord, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, under the directions of the king, Asaph, and Jeduthun and Heman.

Ver. 7.—This verse introduces a large additional number of those called for the present brethren of the foregoing twenty-four. These brethren (partly composed of their sons, as appears from vers. 9—31) were to aid in the songs of the Lord, and were apparently under instruction for that purpose. Each one of the twenty-four had eleven associated subordinates with him, and for whose instruction and service he was probably answerable. These would, of course, multiply up to the two hundred four score and eight mentioned in the verse. This verse appears (contrary to the interpretation of Keil, Bertheau, and others) with sufficient precision to mark two classes *נָבָעִים*, and *נָבָרִים*, the latter not embracing the former, but the two together making up the two hundred and eighty-eight spoken of. These two classes will surely satisfy the “teacher and the scholar” classification of the following verse; the classes are denoted by the same Hebrew roots. In ver. 7 the passive Pual participle of the instructed and the Hiphil participle of the cunning, or skilled, correspond exactly with the “scholar” (*נָבָרִים*) and the “teacher” (*נָבָעִים*) of ver. 8. The contents of vers. 9—31 point to the same, being as they are without an allusion to any other outsiders—to any but the already introduced names of “sons” and “brethren.” The supposing, therefore, of any allusion here to the “four thousand” of ch. xxiii. 5 seems unnecessary and unnatural in whatever way they were distributed—and probably enough it was in an analogous manner—no distinct reference is made to them here.

Ver. 8.—This verse should be translated, And they cast lots of attendance, small and great equally, teacher with scholar. The

Septuagint translates ἡράκλειον τοῦ λότου by the words κλήρους ἐφημερῶν.

Vers. 9—31.—*List of the choirs in the order in which their lots came.* The formula, his sons, and his brethren, which follows twenty-two out of the twenty-four leaders' names which now come before us, is absent from ver. 9, where we should have looked for it, viz. after the name Joseph. It has been supposed that this is a mere omission of carelessness. But this can scarcely be asserted conclusively. It is observable, for instance, that the order of the formula in the same verse, on occasion of its very first occurrence, is not identical with the other twenty-two instances of it, the word "brethren" preceding "sons," and the pronoun "he" being expressed. The preposition (בְּ) is sometimes expressed and sometimes not expressed before both the proper names and the ordinal numerals of the list. Examination of the contents of these verses shows, either that it was due to the Divine direction of the lot (Prov. xvi. 33) that an issue resulted which looks so unlike mere chance, and the system of which is so methodical and traccable; or that the lot-taking was not one of families and sons, all thrown together from the first. This supposition would, of course, leave room for some such ingenious hypothesis as that

of Berthean, too artificial by far to be defensible except as a theory that would indeed work out the result. He suggests that the *modus operandi* was by two urns, one for the first seven odd numbers, into which were put the names of Asaph's four sons and of the second, third, and fourth of Heman; the other for the first seven even numbers, into which were put the six sons of Jeduthun and the first of Heman. Turning from such a concocted theory to these verses, we find that the first cast brings to the surface the second son of Asaph, and the second cast brings up the eldest son of Jeduthun. At the end of the seventh all of Asaph's sons are exhausted, and what would have been his next place (the ninth) is occupied by the second son of Heman, whose eldest had just taken the sixth place so thrown out by the lot. At the end of the fourteenth throw Jeduthun's six sons are all used up, and all the remaining places belong to Heman's sons, but still in the order in which they are thrown out by the lot.

Ver. 21.—Mattithiah (see ch. xv. 18, 21). No other of these twenty-four names is found elsewhere out of this chapter in the history, a just indication of the trustworthiness rather than the contrary of this table.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 7.—*Instruction in songs.* It was according to the king's order that schools of psalmody were appointed in connection with Levitical ministrations. He was himself fitted by temperament, by genius, by piety, by proficiency in art, to found such schools, and to give them an impulse and inspiration. In the skill and system with which he gave himself to this work, he showed his far-sighted wisdom. For out of his labour and care sprang, directly, all Hebrew minstrelsy of later times, and, indirectly, in no small measure, all Christian psalmody.

I. THE SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE OF PSALMODY. If the singing of hymns, the chanting of psalms, the vocal rendering of carols, canticles, and anthems, be mere musical exercise and enjoyment, it is no psalmody in God's ear. In acceptable praise the heart is the all-essential element. David felt this when he exclaimed, "Sing ye praises with understanding;" and Paul when he admonished Christians to "make melody with their heart unto the Lord."

II. THE METRICAL AND MUSICAL FORM OF PSALMODY. The utterance of praise may be spontaneous. But if it is to be social, such as many may join in, it must be prepared. Thanksgiving, when it assumes a permanent shape and finds a social utterance, must come under the control of the rules of art. Metrical language and melody and harmony thus became the body of which adoration and gratitude, confidence and love, are the soul. We see an illustration of these principles in the sacred minstrelsy of David. He composed devout and spiritual odes, and directed that these should be sung by trained choirs to the accompaniment of instrumental music. However different may be the language and the music of our social praise, we cannot dispense with art. The choice in psalmody does not lie between spontaneity and art, but between bad art and good. Hence the perpetual importance of what is called in the text "instruction in the songs of the Lord." There must be teaching and teachers, labour and skill, adaptation to persons and seasons—all alike penetrated by the spirit of true devotion.

CONCLUSION. 1. The importance of a due attention to "the service of song in the house of the Lord." 2. The danger, on the one hand, of carelessness and slovenliness, which spring from and conduce to irreverence; and, on the other hand, of losing the spirit in exaggerating the importance of the form. 3. The desirableness of cultivating a devout and grateful spirit towards him who "inhabiteth the praises of Israel," and who receives the unceasing adoration of the heavenly hosts.—T.

Ver. 8.—"Small and great, teacher and scholar." We have here an enumeration of the several courses of the Levites, appointed by lot to minister in due order. In the words which precede the enumeration, we have summarized the variety of ages and classes, all of whom were employed and accepted by the Lord in his service.

I. AN EPITOME OF HUMAN SOCIETY AS CONSTITUTED BY GOD. Our common humanity is consistent with great variety and intermixture of elements. It has pleased God not only that generation should succeed generation, but that members of the human race of all ages should exist together in human society. It is obviously his will that mankind should be composed of those who teach and those who learn.

II. AN ARRANGEMENT TO WHICH THE PROVISIONS OF REDEMPTION EXACTLY CORRESPOND. If the same God rules in providence and saves in redemption, we may expect to find a suitable provision made for the varied wants of varied classes. Accordingly we find that the Bible is equally adapted to young and old; that the redemption of Christ is limited to no age or class; that the Holy Spirit is poured out from above without regard to the distinctions upon which men often lay an undue stress; that religion is equally intended for the benefit of all mankind.

III. THAT SOCIETY SHOULD BE SO CONSTITUTED IS PRODUCTIVE OF MUTUAL ADVANTAGE. The great serve the small, and the small the great; the scholar is indebted to the teacher, who in turn derives many benefits from his pupils. There is no member of the human race who is not both a benefactor and a beneficiary. It is well that all should live in voluntary and cheerful compliance with this Divine ordinance.

IV. ALL CLASSES AND AGES MAY CO-OPERATE FOR THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL AND THE SERVICE OF GOD. The cause of Christ is one which the feeblest child may help to advance, and which may employ the abilities of the greatest and most learned. Our Lord despairs not the lowliest service; and the loftiest are honoured in being permitted to do his will and glorify his Name.—T.

Vers. 1-31.—"The service of the house of God." In this chapter, which gives the musical arrangements made for the "service of the house of the Lord," we have suggestions which take our thoughts over the wider ground of public worship. We have—

I. Two ELEMENTS WHICH IT SHOULD INCLUDE. Divine service is felt to be essentially incomplete without: 1. *Praise*. All who love the house of God delight "to give thanks and to praise the Lord" (ver. 3). We have such a God for our God that we can "give thanks and praise" him whenever we remember him. The devotees of heathen deities cannot do so; they can only prostrate themselves abjectly before their gods, or deprecate their capricious wrath: there is nothing in the beings they worship worthy of their honour. In the only wise God, in the holy and pitiful Father of our spirits, in the righteous Lord of all, in the merciful Redeemer of mankind, in the patient, striving, cleansing Spirit of God, in this God who is our God, we have One whom we can praise continually, and with all the energies and faculties of our nature, and then feel that we have failed to render unto him "the glory which is due unto his Name." 2. *Instruction*. There were to be workmen "who should prophesy" (ver. 1), and they "prophesied with a harp;" i.e. their function was to utter sacred, instructive, inspiring words in their capacity as choristers. The music of the sanctuary was to be subordinated to the utterance of Divine truth, the sound to the sense, the ear to the soul. One musical leader was even spoken of as "the king's seer in the words of God" (ver. 5). Here we have an argument *à fortiori*. If in the act of praising, when the first end in view is the offering thus presented to God himself, we are to use words which will be instructive and elevating to the worshippers, how much more are we to provide that other parts of Divine service shall be full of sacred instruction, shall tend to edify, to enlighten, to sustain!

II. FOUR FEATURES BY WHICH IT SHOULD BE CHARACTERIZED. **1. Order.** The whole chapter is an argument for this; the division into choirs, with their respective leaders, and the arrangement as to their turn of service, speak of careful orderliness. The beauty of holiness in which we should worship requires that there be no confusion, embarrassment, disorder (1 Cor. iv. 33, 40). **2. Excellency.** They were duly “instructed in the songs of the Lord” (ver. 7). No doubt they were taught to take their parts well “under the hands of their father,” or of some competent teacher. In everything we do in God’s house we should aim at excellency. Whether it be in offering prayer, or in reading, or in preaching, or in singing, every one should do his very best. There is no place where men and women should be so desirous of putting forth their utmost talents as in the house of him from whom all faculty and all opportunity have been received. **3. Variety.** The instruments of music used were various—“cymbals, psalteries, and harps.” Doubtless others would have been used if they had been known and found fitting. We may do better to use one instrument of music only, but we do not well to make God’s service monotonous. We should make it as attractive with variety of engagements, freshness of thought and newness of method as is consistent with reverence and propriety. **4. Amity.** “They cast lots . . . as well the small as the great, the teacher as the scholar.” The arrangement was made so that there should be no partiality in the appointment made, and, if possible, no dissatisfaction with the place taken. We should shun giving offence, and also taking it. Happy the Church where there is *concord from the choir and no discord within it.*—C.

Vers. 1, 3.—Prophesying with a harp. “Prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals;” “Who prophesied with a harp.” The point suggested is that *music*, which is skill of hand, may help *song*, which is skill of voice. The term “prophesying” is variously employed in the Scriptures. Sometimes it seems to stand, in a very general way, for sharing in religious worship. At other times the idea of instructing people in the will of God, as it had been immediately revealed to the speaker, is prominent. And at yet other times there is reference to the fore-announcing of coming events. Here, in the passages before us, the element of *instruction* is the prominent thing, or the exerting of a gracious influence on others by music, which should bear direct relation to the culture of their spiritual life. And this is the proper and the high function of religious music. Consider—

I. INSTRUCTION AS THE EQUIVALENT OF CULTURE. This involves a large view of instruction, as bearing relation to the *whole man*—heart and feeling as well as mind. For the purpose of a man’s instruction—edification, soul-culture—there need not be a direct appeal to his intelligence, because his receptive faculties are not limited to his intellect; a man receives even more through *feeling* than through *brain* and mind. But in an age when there is an extravagant worship of knowledge, this point needs consideration and prominence, in order that better attention may be paid to the means for reaching the religious sensibility. John Howe has a sentence which may bear on this possibility of culture otherwise than through a man’s *mind*. He says, in one of his most serious moods, “Nor do I believe it can ever be proved that God never doth immediately testify his own special love to holy souls without the intervention of some part of his eternal Word, made use of as a present instrument to that purpose; or that he always doth it in the way of *methodical reasoning therefrom*.” It is plain that in our general education a thousand other influences than the intellectual reach us and aid us, and other men than those who can be called intellectual influence us; and we may be sure that the same is true of the education of our soul’s spiritual life. Let our idea of instruction pass into the larger, broader thought of *culture, edification*, and then we see that—

II. MUSIC MAY BECOME AN IMPORTANT AGENCY IN SOUL-CULTURE. By many and various illustrations the *refining, ennobling, educative* influence of music may be shown. **1.** Childhood songs implant the first seeds of good. **2.** Rhyme bears direct relation to memory, and materially aids the retention of good sentiments and thoughts. **3.** Music has a soothing power, as seen in King Saul; and often becomes a moral preparation for the due reception of instruction in the milder aspects of truth and the gentler forms of duty. **4.** Music often finds relieving expression for emotions, either of joy or of sorrow, which are too intense for language.

“Music! Oh how faint, how weak—
Language fades before thy spell!
Why should feeling ever speak,
When thou canst breathe her soul so well!”

Illustrate by Mendelssohn's ‘Songs without Words.’ 5. Music bears direct relation to religious feeling. Sounds of music bear a twin influence with the sights of nature; both bring home to human hearts some sense of the eternal harmonies and beauties of the worlds unseen, and of the glorious God who is above and in them all. Then the gift of music, as well as song, must lie on God's altar. Of the earth-temple, as well as of the heavenly, it must be true, “As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there.”—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*Consecrated song.* “Instructed in the songs of the Lord, even all that were cunning.” The general subject of the consecration of song to the Lord's service has been dealt with in previous homilies. Here two points gain prominence. Men who serve with song must be (1) men with a gift; and (2) men with the gift cultured.

I. **MEN WITH A GIFT.** “Cunning,” clever, skilled, having this as a natural endowment. Dwell on the importance of fully recognizing the Divine distribution of gifts in our times, as truly as in the age of the apostles; and then the practical importance of looking out the men and women among us who have a Divine endowment. Each one of us should be anxious to find his or her own gift, and each one should be quick to observe his brother's gift. The thing which lifts a man above commonplace is his gift, and in honouring it we honour God in him.

II. **MEN WITH THE GIFT CULTURED.** In this matter our responsibility comes to view. In our service to God we are bound to see to it that the men and women of gifts among us have their chance of due instruction and culture. Worldly men are keen to discover talent, and train it. But this needs to be more fully done within Christ's Church, and in respect especially of the gifts of preaching, music, and song.

Dealing with the song-gift, it may be shown how dependent it is upon culture; how it responds to instruction and practice, and what a power it exerts on men, as hymn-power, anthem-power, chorus-power, song-power. The ancient legend of Eurydice did but declare the wondrous spell that ever goes with beauteous song—

“Perchance at last,
Zeus willing, this dumb lyre and whispering voice
Shall wake, by love inspired, to such clear note
As soars above the stars, and swelling, life
Our souls to highest heaven.”

R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVI.

This chapter is occupied in its first nineteen verses with an enumeration of the porters and then of their arrangement. The porters were those who were to have charge of the entrances of the sanctuary. For at present, all was in plan only, thus set out by David beforehand.

Ver. 1.—The subject of the porters has been before us in ch. ix. 17—27; xv. 23, 24; xvi. 38; xxiii. 5, in which last passage we are told that there were four thousand of the Levites who were porters. The divisions of the porters spoken of in the present chapter were from the sons of Korah or Kore, and Merari (vers. 10, 19). The Korahite

porters are given us in the first nine verses. The first mentioned is Meshelemiah, who, though called the same in vers. 2, 9, appears as Shelemiah in ver. 14, and in ch. ix. 19 as Shallum. Asaph, given here as one of the ancestors, must be replaced by Ebi-asaph (ch. vi. 23, 37; ix. 19; also Exod. vi. 24), who was a Korahite, whereas Asaph was a Gershonite (ch. vi. 39, 43).

Vers. 2, 3.—These verses contain the enumeration of seven sons of Shelemiah, of the firstborn of whom, viz. Zechariah, express mention was made in ch. ix. 21.

Vers. 4, 5.—Here we have the enumeration of eight sons of Obed-edom (ch. xv. 21, 24; xvi. 38). That in this last reference Obed-edom seems to be called “son of Jeduthun” is owing probably to the omission of a name. For former occurrences of the sentence,

God blessed him, with its present evident allusion, see ch. xii. 14; 2 Sam. vi. 11. To this passage, the expression of ch. xxv. 5, “to lift up the horn,” is probably analogous, where see comment.

Vers. 6, 7.—In the former of these verses, eulogy is pronounced by anticipation on the six grandsons of Obed-edom through his son Shemaiyah, about to be mentioned in the latter verse. The singular number of the verb (**לִבְנָה**), with a plural nominative, as found here, often occurs elsewhere, and repeatedly, even in this book, in cases where the relative pronoun **וְ** intervenes between the subject and its verb. That ruled throughout the house of their father. The plural masculine abstract noun (**מִלְבָנָה**) here employed, in place of a verbal or participial form, is intended to gain force. A similar use of the feminine form of the same noun in the singular, and with suffix, may be cited from 2 Chron. xxxii. 9. Whose brethren. An erroneous translation for *his brethren*; a correction, however, rendering more patent the inconvenience of the unexplained absence of the conjunction, which seems to be called for before both “Elzabad,” and “his brethren.” Bertheau suggests that other names are wanting which should fill up the meaning of “his brethren.” The brethren intended were probably Elihu and Semachiah.

Vers. 8.—Able men for strength for the service. The Hebrew gives this in the singular, **בָּרִאֵבָן**, etc. The apparent intention is to *distribute* equally to each and every one of all of the sons of Obed-edom, the high character for strength given to them as grouped here together.

Vers. 9.—This somewhat sudden return to the name of Meshelemiah is evidently in order to put his numbers in a convenient position, to be added to those of Obed-edom just stated, thus making in all eighty porters from the Korahites.

Vers. 10, 11.—The porters from the descendants of Merari are given in these two verses, in all thirteen. Hosah, it will be remembered, is found together with Obed-edom in ch. xvi. 38, as one of the porters of the ark. These thirteen bring up the number of porters to ninety-three. We have read (ch. ix. 22) that later the number became two hundred and twelve. Though . . . yet. The likelier translation of the Hebrew would be, For there was not a firstborn (*i.e.* the issue of the firstborn had failed, and his line was therefore extinct), and his father made him the chief. Moreover, it is but probable that, if it had been a case of superseding the firstborn, the fact would not have been stated without an explanation of what had led to it or justified it.

Ver. 12.—Translate, To these divisions of the porters, as regards the chief men, belonged the charge together with their brethren to officiate in the house of the Lord. According to the present chapter, then, the *divisions* add up to ninety-three. And if at any time of the history it were the case that these ninety-three were the leaders of groups among the total of “four thousand porters,” it would put exactly forty-two under each of these ninety-three, leaving but one over. This number ninety-three, meantime, does not agree with the *two hundred and twelve* of ch. ix. 22. And the *three score and two* of Obed-edom in ver. 8 of the present chapter does not agree with the *three score and eight* of Obed-edom in ch. xvi. 38. At the same time, no little light may be thrown on this subject by noticing that the porters numbered in Zerubbabel’s time *one hundred and thirty-nine* (Ezra ii. 42); and that the number *one hundred and seventy-two* is given for them by Nehemiah (Neh. xi. 19). The conclusion may well be that the numbers varied in David’s time and the other times severally; and that the date in question (ch. ix. 22) was not the same with the date of David in our present chapter, but was a subsequent date nearer the time of the Captivity. There is, therefore, no special ground for doubting the accuracy of the numbers given in this chapter.

Vers. 14—16.—The casting of lots for the four chief names and the four chief aspects of gates, now proceeds. A special note is made of the care taken for the house of *Asuppim*; *i.e.* of “gatherings” or “stores.” For all that we know of this “house,” we seem to be left to the verses (15, 17) of this passage, and to the expression (Neh. xii. 25), “the storehouses, or stores of the gates” (though the Authorized Version, the “thresholds” of the gates), which would have been more intelligible had it been reversed, “the gates of the stores.” Presumably it was a building for keeping safe certain of the sacred property, and was situated south of the temple, and, judging from ver. 17, had two doorways. The Vulgate translates *seniorum concilium*. To *Shuppim*. Nothing can be made of this word in this connection, as a proper name, though we have it (ch. vii. 12, 15) as such. It is now generally rejected, as probably due to the error of some transcriber, whose eye may have been caught again by the last two syllables of the closely preceding “*Asuppim*.” But some would place it as the last word of the previous verse, and make it amplify the meaning of *Asuppim*, *e.g.* “gatherings for stores.” *Shallecheth*. By derivation, this word means “sending or throwing down.” Hence some call it, “the refuse gate.” The situation of it is, how-

ever, defined here, as by the causeway of the going up, and would seem to render such an interpretation less likely. According to Grove (in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary'), this causeway is still traceable: it runs up from the central valley of the town to the sacred site west of the temple (1 Kings x. 5; 2 Chron. ix. 4); and Grove would identify the "gate of Shallecheth" with the present *Bab Silsileh*. The Septuagint translates ἡ πύλη παστοφορῶν, i.e. the gate of the temple-cell, which word they could get from the inverting of the order of the first two letters of the Hebrew *Shallecheth*. The Septuagint then omits the following word, πάλιον, Ward against ward; i.e. watch with watch. The expression appears to refer to the fact that Hosah's lot threw to him the charge of a double position.

Vers. 17, 18.—These verses give the number of individuals who composed the watch at a time, beginning again from Shemeliah's eastward position. The two and two toward *Asuppim* suggest most naturally the supposition of two attendants at each of two gates, or else of two succeeding two. *Parbar* (פָּרְבָּר). This word appears as בָּרְבָּר in 2 Kings xxiii. 11. These words, with forms akin to them, are often found in the Targums, but not elsewhere in the Scriptures. The nearest approach to the meaning of the word, as yet discovered, is a "suburb." The connection may just do as much as indicate that, whereas four porters kept the causeway gate, the *Parbar* gate was in closer proximity to the temple that was to be, but what this *Parbar* really was is not yet ascertained. Possibly it is the *προστατεύω* of Josephus ("Ant.", xv. xi. 5). If we add the numbers of Levites given in these two verses, it will be noticed that they mount up to twenty-four.

Vers. 20—28.—These verses describe those Levites to whom belonged the care of the treasures of the house of God and of the treasures of things dedicated, i.e. "dedicated to maintain the house of the Lord" (vers. 27, 28).

Vers. 20.—First, the Hebrew text contains no "of" in the first word of this verse; and, secondly, no meaning can be obtained out of the name *Ahijah* as it is placed here. The Septuagint reading, "their brethren," is exactly what we should expect, and is paralleled by other passages (2 Chron. xxix. 34). This correction of the present text may be safely accepted, viz. בְּנֵי for בְּנֵי. The two classes of treasures are here marked, preparatory to the statements of vers. 22 and 26—28.

Vers. 21, 22.—These verses name those who had the care of the treasures of the house of the Lord. They are Gershonites

through Laadan, previously called *Ldbni* (ch. vi. 17; also Exod. vi. 17; Numb. iii. 18). The sons named as heads of houses are three, viz. *Jehieli* (ch. xxiii. 8) and his sons, *Zetham* and *Joel*. Those who think that ch. xxiii. 8 carries with it the meaning that *Jehieli*, *Zetham*, and *Joel* were all three brothers, can, in point of fact, plausibly reduce this verse to their shape. For the *yod*, not welcome at the end of the name *Jehieli* here, might be read the conjunction *vau* in both instances in which it occurs. The reading would then run thus: "Jehiel and the sons of *Jehiel*, both *Zetham* and *Joel* his brother."

Vers. 23.—The chiefs of the preceding two verses were introduced as descendants of Gershon through his son Laadan. The four names of this verse would seem to stand collectively for that of their father Kohath. One might, under these circumstances, have looked for the name of some member of each of these sub-families to appear in the number of the treasure-keepers just about to be mentioned. This is not so. Yet among other officials, and before the end of the general subject, the *Izharites* (ver. 29) and the *Hebronites* (vers. 30, 31) do appear. This may possibly explain the mapping out thus of the Kohath family.

Vers. 24, 25.—Shebuel (ch. xxiii. 16; xxiv. 20), then, was the Amramite representative (and apparently a very special one in the office of נִזְבֵּן, here attributed to him) through Gershom, the elder son of Moses. Next, through Eliezer, the second son of Moses, and through Rehahiah, son of Eliezer (ch. xxiii. 17), we are brought to the four—Jeshaiah (ch. xxiv. 21, *Iessiah*), and Joram, and Zichri, and Shelomith, who seem at first to mark four successions of generations upon *Rehahiah*, but who more probably (though it cannot be said positively) were four brothers, each a son of *Rehahiah* (ch. xxiii. 17). And it may be that it is to these four that reference is made in the first clause of our next verse (26), "Which *Shelomith* and his brethren," etc. The *Shelomith* here intended as an Amramite must be distinguished from the Gershonite of ch. xxiii. 9, and from the *Izharite* of ch. xxiii. 18.

Vers. 26.—The treasures. The very first use of this word to signify a place where treasures were kept is in Josh. vi. 19, 24. The same word is used for either the place or the treasures kept in it. Not found in the Books of Samuel, the word often occurs in the two Books of Kings and of Chronicles, once in Ezra, several times in Nehemiah, etc. In our next chapter (ch. xxvii. 25, 27, 28) it appears in the Authorized Version as "storehouses" and "cellars." Captains over thousands and

hundreds (so see Exod. xviii. 21, 25; Numb. xxxi. 14, etc.; Deut. i. 15; 1 Sam. viii. 12, etc.). Captains of the host (so Deut. xx. 9; Josh. v. 14, 15; Judg. iv. 2; 1 Sam. xvii. 55, etc.).

Ver. 27.—For such proceeds of war, see 2 Sam. viii. 10—12, etc.

Ver. 28.—It is, perhaps, somewhat remarkable that, though the sacred history suggests to us numerous fit occasions for the “dedications” spoken of in this verse, yet they are not described in detail, nor even alluded to at the times when they occurred. Samuel, Saul, Abner, and Joab had then been unwittingly finding some of the treasures now disposed to highest use by David.

Vers. 29—32.—The chapter closes with some enumeration of those who were appointed to the outward business (נְפָלָאָרְכָּן) over Israel, i.e. the secular or civic rather than temple business.

Ver. 29.—Though the Authorized Version of ch. xv. 22 would make it appear very unlikely that the Chenaniah, a “chief of the Levites,” here spoken of was identical with the present Chenaniah, yet the other translation of that passage, and the view that some take of it as describing one who had the special ordering of the *carrying* of the ark, would leave it more likely. For the officers and judges, see ch. xxiii. 4; 2 Chron. xix. 5—11. The too generic term “officers” (Exod. v. 6—19; Numb. xi. 16, etc.) may be advantageously superseded by the word “scribes.” These scribes and judges, it appears, were taken from the families of Izhar and Hebron alone, without any Amramite or Uzzielite of the other Kohathites, and without any Gershonite or Merarite of the other Levites.

Ver. 30.—Were officers among them of Israel. The simpler translation would be, *were for the superintending of Israel* (compare the verb in ver. 32). On this side Jordan westward; literally, *across Jordan westward*, the point of view being from the Persian side. So Ezra iv. 16; vi. 6; viii. 36; Neh. ii. 7; but also Josh. v. 1; xxii. 7, when the point of view was that of those who had still to cross the Jordan to the west. The expression, in all the business of

the Lord, is probably no mere reminiscence of the temple or semi-sacred business (such as the gathering of the tithes, etc.), but rather the recognition of the fact that all that pertained to the right discharge of the civil duties of an Israelite’s life lay within that description.

Ver. 31.—This verse is at first sight obscure; but its purport is to say that the Hebronite family was, in the last year of David’s reign, found at Jazer of Gilad, which seems a *Merarite* city (Josh. xiii. 25; xxi. 39; Numb. xxii. 32), and that Jerijah (ch. xxiii. 19; xxiv. 23) was then chief of them. He and his brethren were now appointed to the superintendence of the two tribes and a half eastward of Jordan, while “Hashabiah and his brethren” fulfilled the like duties westward of Jordan. The number of those east of Jordan constituted overseers seems large in proportion to those mentioned on the west; but we must bear in mind that the numbers of Chenaniah and their range of sphere are not stated. These will presumably complete the six thousand of ch. xxiii. 4. Otherwise we have but to fall back on the conviction that the present account is imperfect as well as brief.

Ver. 32.—Chief fathers. The number of chief fathers mentioned in this verse leads Keil to point out very justly that here at least the designation cannot mean anything beyond the fathers of individual families—cannot mean the heads of those groups which are composed of all the branches or relations of one house. They must have been heads of households (*πατέρες*), not heads of *fathers’ houses* (*πατρῶας*). The ambiguity is owing to the use of the words נְשָׁרָרְבָּנָן in ver. 32, the latter of which words has so often supposed the word נְשָׁרָר to precede it, coupled to it by a hyphen. Adding the numbers of vers. 30 and 32, we find a total of Hebronite “officers and judges” amounting to four thousand four hundred. The remaining sixteen hundred to complete the “six thousand” were drawn from the Gershon, Amram, and Izhar families. Some of the Uzzielites probably helped the Hebronites.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 14.—“*A wise counsellor.*” Nothing more is told us of this person than is contained in these words; but how much does even so brief a record imply!

I. THE EVENTS OF HUMAN LIFE OFTEN CALL FOR THE EXERCISE OF WISDOM IN COUNSEL. It is so in the Church, in order that provision may be made for spiritual wants, that employment may be found for spiritual gifts, that differences may be composed and strength consolidated. It is so in the world; for human society presents so many

difficult problems, and folly and ignorance are so general, that only a leaven of wisdom can preserve mankind from corruption and dissolution.

II. THOSE NOT PERSONALLY CONCERNED IN ANY BUSINESS ARE SOMETIMES MOST FITTED TO ADVISE. A wise man is not only wise for himself; his wisdom is intended by Providence to be placed at the service of others. And the impartiality of an onlooker often enables him to take a wider view and to form a fairer judgment than can be possible to others more interested and excited.

III. THERE ARE QUALITIES WHICH ARE SPECIALLY CONTRIBUTIVE TO WISDOM. These may be enumerated—natural sagacity, prolonged experience, knowledge, impartiality of mind, sympathy with human feelings, insight into character, etc. Such gifts and acquirements make a man “a wise counsellor.”

IV. GOD, IN HIS PROVIDENCE, IS EVER RAISING UP SUCH COUNSELLORS FOR THE SERVICE OF MANKIND. It has often been observed that, in the conduct of great movements, Providence employs men of impulse and energy, and conjoins with them in service men of deliberate, calm, sagacious judgment. And it is not only in what are called great affairs that this arrangement is observable. Wise men may be found in all conditions of life.

V. THE HAPPIEST RESULTS FOLLOW THE COUNSELS OF THE WISE. They are the means of directing the young, of succouring the tempted, of guiding the affairs of state, of promoting the peace of Churches, of advancing the gospel of Christ.—T.

Ver. 20.—*Temple treasures.* Only very thoughtless persons can suppose that religion and money can be dissociated. In this world things material and spiritual are so blended that we have not to ask—Must the cause of God have anything to do with wealth and property? but—What are the proper and scriptural relations between them? In explaining these, we remark—

I. ALL TREASURE IS THE LORD's. He created all that men use and prize. It is his own property. If we give to him, we can only give “of his own.”

II. IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE TREASURE IS A TRUST. The irreligious cannot be expected so to regard it; but it is marvellous that enlightened Christians can ever look upon the matter in any other light. God lends men their possessions that they may use them for his glory, and prepare to give in an account to himself, approving their fidelity and piety.

III. TREASURE MAY BE CONSECRATED TO THE LORD'S TEMPLE. What in the olden time among the Jews the temple at Jerusalem was regarded as being, that the Church of Christ is in this dispensation. And money may lawfully and wisely be expended in the erection of churches, chapels, schools, mission-rooms, etc., and in the maintenance of pastors, teachers, and evangelists. Christian wisdom may define the limits and extent of generous gifts. But, although in the ages of superstition there may have been danger of excess in donatious and endowments, there is very little danger in our days, when large sums are spent on personal luxuries and ostentation, and when there is an impression that the one special department for economy is religion.

IV. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE LORD'S TREASURE SHOULD BE IN SAFE KEEPING. It is an honourable office to have charge of religious and benevolent funds. It should be regarded as a stewardship from Heaven. Many who cannot preach or teach may render service in Christ's Churches by acting as treasurers and almoners, and by their faithful custody and wise disbursement of funds may serve the body of Christ and please the Divine Head.—T.

Ver. 29.—“*Officers and judges.*” Israel was a theocracy; the state was the Church, and the Church was the state. Hence the king seems half a priest; and the Levites were appointed to the discharge of civil and magisterial offices.

I. CIVIL SOCIETY AND CIVIL ORDER ARE OF GOD. Jehovah is the supreme Governor, the Lord and King of all. Subordination and obedience are principles in the Divine government. Earthly governments are all imperfect, yet they contain in them elements of Divine significance. “The powers that be are ordained of God;” not that all rulers act righteously, or that there are no cases where resistance is justifiable; but that so far as governments embody the principles of peace and order they have the sanction of the King of kings.

II. IT IS LAWFUL FOR RELIGIOUS MEN TO SERVE IN THE STATE. Just as labour, trade, navigation, etc., are all lawful, and are sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer, so is it with the office of the magistrate, the servant of the state.

III. IT IS FOR THE ADVANTAGE OF ALL PARTIES THAT RELIGIOUS MEN SHOULD TAKE CIVIL OFFICE. For the officers and judges themselves, as the position will enlarge the area of their influence, and promote the soundness of their judgment and the widening of their sympathies. For the subjects generally, who will benefit when Christianity is brought to bear upon the discharge of duties which involve the general interests.

IV. GOOD RULERS SHOULD BE SUPPORTED BY THE CONFIDENCE, CO-OPERATION, AND PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE. We cannot be too thankful when men of Christian character are appointed to public positions. It becomes us, remembering the special dangers and temptations to which such persons are exposed, to plead on their behalf at the throne of grace, that they may be taught by the Holy Spirit to speak the truth fearlessly, to rebuke iniquity, to act righteously, and so to secure the public tranquillity and well-being, and the glory of God.—T.

Vers. 1—28.—*The blessing of God.* There lies much meaning in the simple words, “God blessed him” (ver. 5). They refer to Obed-edom, and may remind us—

I. THAT IT IS THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF A RIGHT STATE OF HEART TOWARD GOD. Obed-edom had taken the ark into his house when God “made a breach upon Uzza” (ch. xiii. 11). He then and thus gained the favour of Jehovah, not indeed by the mere fact that the ark of the covenant was under his roof, but because his readiness to receive and preserve it was the expression of a true and genuine piety (see homily *in loc.*). If our “heart is right in the sight of God,” so that we are eager to render to him or to his cause any service we can bring, we are then in that spiritual condition in which we may look for the Divine blessing. It is not any one single action, but a right relation of soul to God, that draws down his abiding favour.

II. THAT IT TAKES VARIOUS FORMS WITH US, AS IT DID IN ANCIENT TIMES. 1. The temporal forms it assumed then. These were: (1) Family mercies—God blessed Obed-edom by enlarging his household (vers. 4, 5), and giving him descendants of whom he could be proud (vers. 6—8). (2) Military reputation—some were “mighty men of valour” (ver. 6.) (3) Bodily vigour—others were “able men for strength for the service” (ver. 8). (4) Posts of special honour—others were “over the treasures of the dedicated things” (vers. 20—28). God may grant us his blessing in much the same way now; but while we gratefully accept it and conscientiously use it, if he does so bestow it, we must not reckon on these lower manifestations of his Divine regard. We are on sure ground when we speak of: 2. The spiritual forms it assumes now. They are such as these: (1) Concord and piety in the home; (2) reputation for devoted service of Christ; (3) capacity for holy usefulness; (4) trustfulness. These are blessings which correspond with those of the older dispensation, but which take a more spiritual form. They are blessings which fill the heart rather than the hand, benedictions of “the kingdom of heaven” rather than bestowments of the monarchy of earth. If it can be said of any of us, in any large and full sense, that “God blessed him,” such a one will be the recipient of other bestowments beside these—of (5) rest of heart in Christ; (6) joy of faithful and loving service; (7) hope of eternal glory.—C.

Vers. 29—32.—*The business of the Lord and the service of the king.* The duties which an Israelite might render to his Divine and to his earthly sovereign are thus expressed (ver. 30). They are also spoken of as “matters pertaining to God and affairs of the king” (ver. 32). The distinction thus drawn is suggestive of the relation which the two services sustain to one another. We conclude—

I. THAT THEY ARE CLEARLY DISTINGUISHABLE, ONE FROM THE OTHER. It is one thing to “serve God” and another thing to “honour the king.” We may remember those who have been most devoted courtiers, but indifferent servants of God. “Had I but served my God,” etc. (Wolsey). There have been very consecrated men who have lived a life of protest or even of hostility to the “reigning house.” Indeed, it may be the bounden duty of a good man to disobey the mandates of his earthly sovereign. The honours we pay to the “noble army of martyrs” are the best witness that we do make this distinction in our minds. It is a possible thing that we may find ourselves citizens

of a country where the laws of the land are directly at variance with the will of God. But it is also true—

II. THAT THEY ARE COMMONLY FOUND TO BE CONSISTENT ONE WITH THE OTHER. Happily it is not often the case now that a man has to choose whether he will "love the one and hate the other," etc. Usually both may be honourably and faithfully served at the same time. Indeed, it will be found: 1. That we never serve the king better than when we are actively serving God. To be engaging in Divine worship, and thus encouraging piety and the good morals which are its invariable attendant; to be evangelizing, and thus to be elevating and enriching those who have fallen into sin and vice; to be occupied in any of the thousand forms of philanthropy which distinguish this age of ours; to be thus occupied in the "business of the Lord" is to be taking a very true and useful part in "the service of the king." Indeed, the monarch of a land has no more loyal and serviceable subjects than those whose piety prompts them to "every good word and work" among their fellow-subjects. It may be equally true: 2. That we never serve God more truly than when we are serving the king. With the Jew, patriotism and piety were inseparably united. He who wished to please and honour Jehovah strove to serve Israel. He who injured the people of God was an enemy of the Most High. And so with us. The statesman who is faithfully and conscientiously serving his country may be pleasing and serving God quite as much as the minister in the pulpit, or the writer of sacred books at his desk. And not only the statesman who is charged with great and high things: all of us in our humbler ranks, when we join with our fellow-citizens in promoting the welfare of our common country, may be "serving God acceptably." Only, if we wish to enjoy his smile and win his Divine blessing in the act, we must do our work (1) unselfishly, (2) devoutly.—C.

Vers. 1—32.—*Doorkeepers, treasure-keepers, and external services.* We are presented in this chapter with three separate lists. First, the classes of the doorkeepers (vers. 1—19); secondly, the stewards of the sanctuary treasures (vers. 20—28); thirdly, those appointed for the external business (vers. 29—32). According to ver. 19 the doorkeepers were Korahites and Merarites. To the latter belonged Obed-edom and his family, numbering eight sons and sixty-two grandchildren, all valiant heroes. All these doorkeepers were so distributed that twenty-four guard stations were occupied daily. The next enumeration is the treasures of the house of God and the treasures of the dedicated things. The former were under the charge of a branch of the Gershonites; the latter under a branch of the Kohathites. The last list in the chapter refers to the "outward business over Israel." This business comprised the service of "scribes and judges," and it was committed to the Izharites along with Chenaniah. For this work David had set apart six thousand Levites (see ch. xxiii. 4). One spiritual lesson may be learned from the twenty-seventh verse of this chapter: "Out of the spoils won in battles did they dedicate to maintain the house of the Lord." The spiritual points may be suggested by the following heads:—1. The house of the Lord—God's spiritual kingdom—whether it be in a man's own soul or whether it be a Church or nation, must not only be *set up* by the Spirit of God, but it must be *kept up* or "maintained." 2. It is maintained by fighting—fighting our worse than Canaanitish foes—the corruptions of our nature, the self-will, pride, and evil of our hearts, the world, the flesh, and the devil within us and around us. 3. The "spoils" of this spiritual warfare—every victory over sin, every triumph over passion, evil inclination, and temptation—these are all trophies or "spoils" which we must "dedicate" to God, from whom they have all come. His the power, the strength, the victory. All are to be laid at the Saviour's feet and used for his glory. 4. This, not *one* battle, but "battles"—many of every kind. The armcur continually on, the fight continually maintained. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and *having done all, to stand*" (Eph. vi. 13). 5. Thus, and only thus, can the "house" or kingdom of God in a man's soul be "maintained."—W.

Vers. 4, 5.—*Culture by trusts.* The reference made to Obed-edom recalls the fact that he and his family were *blessed* in the trust of work to do for God, the work of caring for his sacred ark-symbol. We may dwell on God's design in relation to the

moral and spiritual characters of men by his putting them in trust, pressing them under the sense of responsibility.

I. MEN PUT IN TRUST. Life is full of these *trusts* from its beginning to its close. The Divine idea for *all* men is exhibited in the two great heads of the race. The first Adam was put in Eden, and *trusted* to dress and keep it, and not to touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The second Adam was set in our human spheres, and *trusted* with the great work of revealing God to men, and redeeming men from their sins. We may trace the same dealing with men at every stage of life. Man is not his own; he is under authority, *trusted* with his Lord's goods, and his Lord's commissions. 1. We deal with our children on this principle. We train character by trusts of increasing value. It is only the bad child that may not be trusted. 2. In youth-time there are foretastes of the grave life-responsibilities which help to prepare us to undertake them. In youth-time we begin to feel the gravity of life, and there is a deepening thoughtfulness, the overshadowing of the seriousness of full manhood. 3. The beginning of manhood brings larger and heavier trusts and responsibilities, which call out our best powers. These trusts concern business, the family, society, and religion. 4. And advancing life provides constant addition of trusts, until our middle manhood sometimes seems to be overweighted, and flesh and heart almost fail. Illustrate by a few special cases: *e.g.* (1) A man waking up to the consciousness of power, in knowledge, skill, influence, position, or wealth: if he be a true-hearted man to feel—I *can*—brings a solemn sense of responsibility, and a great longing to be found faithful. (2) A girl changed into a woman by the responsibility of becoming a wife and a mother. (3) The case of accepting a religious life. The religious man goes every day under the pressure of this trust—"a God to glorify." And if there is any peculiar nobility and power about the life of the religious man, it comes out of his "trust," and is cultured by his "trust." Then we are no true men or women until we have found out our holy burden, and are taking it up, and bearing it cheerfully, as our Lord's yoke laid upon us. When a man views life on earth aright, he finds it to be no play-scene, in which mere appearances meet the eye and the ear. He finds it full of awful realities and possibilities—a *life*, not a *pastime*.

II. MEN CURSED OR BLESSED THROUGH THEIR TRUSTS. A design of blessing is in them, and a tremendous possibility of curse. Lest they should become a curse, they are only given up to the measure of a man's ability. If more were entrusted to us than we could undertake, our natures could only be crushed. In this view some may be thankful that they have only *one* talent; and some warnings come from the careers of those whom we call "men of genius." Men are *blessed* by their trusts when their whole natures open to accept them,—as flowers, responsive to sun and shower, open to receive, and are blessed. In lifting ourselves up to meet trusts is found the repression of all evil, and the culture of all good—the very blossoming of our nature. The true conception of the angel is not with folded wings, standing, but with poised, or outspread wings, ready to obey, rising to meet his trust. Men are *cursed* by their trusts, when they despise or neglect them; when they are unwilling to belong to another; when their natures are shut up to pleasure, not to duty; to self, not to God.

Do you say—But my trusts seem such *little* things? So they are. So must all human trusts be. It is a little thing just to take care of God's ark. Nevertheless they are arranged in the heavenly Father's wisdom, and they may—if we will let them—culture the earth-children for their heavenly home. Let us be "faithful over the *few* things."—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*The acceptableness of lowly services.* "The porters." This subject has been previously treated (see homily on ch. ix. 19), but another outline may be suggested.

I. MAN'S ESTIMATE OF THE LOFTY AND THE LOWLY IN SERVICE. On what considerations does it rest? And what decisions does it involve? Indicate some of the mistakes men make, especially in undervaluing kinds of service that do not gain prominence.

II. THE SUPERIOR PRACTICAL NECESSITY OF LOWLY SERVICES IN ACTUAL LIFE. Illustrate that for our physical and moral good we could much better dispense with the *few* great services than with the thousandfold lowly ones. On these the real

sum of human happiness depends. And it may some day come to light that our Lord's blessed kingdom was more prospered and advanced by Christian faithfulness in little things, than by the great doings which won men's attention and praise.

III. THE POSSIBILITY OF FINDING EXPRESSION FOR HIGH CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IN ALL KINDS OF SERVICE—BOTH IN THE LOFTY AND IN THE LOWLY. Porter and priest may both show themselves, and utter their sanctified characters, in their several work.

IV. THE SUPERIOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPRESSING CHARACTER WHICH ARE FOUND IN THE LOWLY PLACES. Because a certain *self-consciousness* tends to spoil all public work. In the lowly spheres no "eye of man" attracts our attention. We work altogether "in the great Taskmaster's eye;" and so we can be altogether more simple and genuine. There is too much of *self* always tempting men who toil in what are called the higher kinds of service.

In conclusion, show the Divine estimate of *place* and *work*, and how it stands in the second place, subordinate always to the Divine estimate of *character*. God, we may surely say, is chiefly concerned, not with *what we did*, but with *how we did it*. The welcome is given at last to *character*. To priest and porter God will only say at last, "Well done, good and faithful."—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*On dedicating things.* The general idea seems to be that Christians must dedicate *themselves* to God; and though this is most true, it may be presented so as to hide away the fact that God requires the Christian to dedicate to him all he *has*, as well as all he *is*. Still, as in the older times, God is to be served by *things* as well as by *persons*. In the text it is noticed that "Abijah was over the treasures of the house of God, and over the treasures of the dedicated things." It may be well to point out the important relations which *things* bear to *persons*. (1) The sense of *possession* in *things*. (2) The selection and preservation of *things* as expressing *character*. (3) The power of *representation* in *things*; a gift may carry a man himself to his friend. (4) The use of *things* to indicate *feeling*. It may be said that God does not really care for "things," and that all "things" are already his; that he even refuses sacrifice and offerings, and only asks for men's devotion, love, and trust. But if God permits us to have the sense of possession, and, in ever so limited a sense, to call *things our own*, we may be sure that he does care for *things*, because they can do just what our *voice* in worship can do—(1) reveal man to him; and (2) express man's particular emotions to him. We can translate into their fitting meanings other signs than verbal ones; and we can make our acts, our gifts, and our possessions speak his praise, directly, and through others whom we may influence and inspire by the devotion to God of what we have. Then show what our *things* may be made to express, illustrating from the devotion of our property and acquisitions to God's service. (1) Dependence on the living God, who giveth to us "all things richly to enjoy." (2) Thanksgiving to him, whose gifts so manifestly pass our deserts. (3) Consecration of self; for to be acceptable everything must carry to God ourselves—his "living sacrifices." (4) Zeal in his honour, that keeps us anxious to devote to him our best. Plead—where are our "dedicated things"? Are they worthy of us? Are they worthy of the God whom we love, who has done such great things for us?—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVII.

This chapter, continuing the general subject of David's arrangements of all the leading departments, sacred and civil, of the kingdom, which he was so soon to yield into the hands of his son Solomon, proceeds in the first fifteen verses to the enumeration of the military courses of his people, month by month. These were twelve in number, each containing twenty-four thousand men;

and the *captain*, or *chief*, or *chief father*, of each is specially mentioned.

Ver. 1.—It is impossible to feel fully satisfied with any translation which the words of this verse offer. Yet there can scarcely be any doubt of the meaning of the verse, viz. that the writer would speak of the children of Israel, including the chief fathers and captains of thousands and hundreds, as regards their courses and their number in their courses, as they succeeded one another, month by month, including

also all those officers who served the king in any relation to these courses—the courses were twelve, and each course was numbered twenty-four thousand. Meantime, when we turn to the list, we do not find any full complement of *chiefs*, *captains*, and *officers* specified, but apparently only the *chief* of each course, with somewhat ambiguous additions in vers. 4 (Mikloth), 6 (Ammizabab), 7 (Zebadiah); while what seems an unnecessary stress repeats the *number* each time. This, however, in fact, tallies with the clause “respecting their number” in the first verse, and may constitute the explanation of the apparent inconsistency in question. Milman (‘Hist. of the Jews,’ i. 251, edit. 1830) says on this military portion of David’s preparations, that he “organized an immense disposable force; every month twenty-four thousand men, furnished in rotation by the tribes, appeared in arms, and were trained as the standing militia of the country. At the head of his army were officers of consummate experience and, what was more highly esteemed in the warfare of the time, extraordinary personal activity, strength, and valour. His heroes remind us of those of Arthur or Charlemagne, excepting that the *armour* of the feudal chieftains constituted their superiority: here, main strength of body and dauntless fortitude of mind.” Which came in and went out month by month; i.e. exchanged places in rotation (2 Kings xi. 5—7, 9; 2 Chron. xxiii. 8).

Ver. 2.—Jashobeam is mentioned in ch. xii. 11 as son of Hachmoni, and as one of those “three mighties” of David, of whom the other two were Eleazar and Shammah (see also ch. xii. 6); he is again referred to (2 Sam. xxiii. 8) in a verse of which the text is corrupt, as “the Tachmonite,” or more correctly “the Tahl-cemonite.” The *tau* in this word is probably an error for the article. Kennicott (‘Diss.’ 72, 82) confirms this supposition by noting that the Book of Samuel constantly replaces by the definite article what appears in Chronicles as “son of.” He has also shown reason for believing that the words in this passage, “that sat in the seat,” are a corruption of the Hebrew text for characters that would spell our name “Jashobeam.” We know nothing of this name “Hachmon,” which may be the name of an earlier forefather, while Zabdiel, thence named “the Hachmonite,” appears to be the name of the actual father of Jashobeam. Jashobeam was of Judah.

Ver. 3.—This verse tells us that Jashobeam belonged to the tribe of Judah, through Perez, the fourth son of Judah (ch. ii. 4).

Ver. 4.—Before the name Dodai we must

supply “Eleazar the son of,” on the authority of ch. xi. 12; 2 Sam. xxiii. 9. The allusion to Mikloth (of the tribe of Benjamin, according to ch. viii. 32; ix. 37) in this verse is not plain. The translation may possibly be the same which our Authorized Version gives, And over the course of the second month was (Eleazar, the son of) Dodai the Ahohite, and (over) his (or, its) course also Mikloth was ruler. The appearances of the Hebrew text, however, favour the supposition of an inaccurate text. A somewhat similar construction and position of words in ver. 6 is less difficult by the absence of a conjunction before Ammizabab.

Ver. 5.—Benaiah (ch. xi. 22—25; 2 Sam. xxiii. 20—23). To this name Keil thinks the word chief (אָחָת), in the succeeding expression, *chief priest*, belongs. Thus Jehoiada would be named here only *priest*. Yet see ch. xii. 27, where Jehoiada is called תְּהִירָה אֶלְעָזָר; and 2 Kings xxv. 18; where שְׁרָאֵת פְּנֵי אֶלְעָזָר stands for our שְׁרָאֵת פְּנֵי אֶלְעָזָר, as applied to Seraiah. Benaiah was manifestly a Aaronite.

Ver. 7.—With this verse, as Keil observes, the description of the successive courses is given with the greatest brevity. Zebadiah was of Judah. Inasmuch as Asahel (ch. xi. 26; 2 Sam. xxiii. 24) was killed by Abner (2 Sam. ii. 23) before this division of military courses was made, it is evident that his name in this place marks, not the individual, but the family. Possibly he and his name were held in all the greater regard, and his son Zebadiah best known for the sake of his father.

Ver. 8.—Shamhuth. For variations in the form of this name, see ch. xi. 27; 2 Sam. xxiii. 25. In the former of these passages also we have *Harorite* in place of our *Izrahite*, and in the latter *Hurodite*. The *Izrahite* probably means of the family of Zerah (ch. ii. 4, 6), and of course marks one of the tribe of Judah. The Hebrew יְרָה evidently does not justify the form as translated “Izrahite.”

Ver. 9.—For Ira, see ch. xi. 28; 2 Sam. xxiii. 26. He was of Tekoa, belonging to Judah.

Ver. 10.—For Helez, see ch. xi. 27; 2 Sam. xxiii. 26. He belonged to Ephraim.

Ver. 11.—For Sibbechai, see ch. xi. 29; xx. 4; 2 Sam. xxi. 18; xxiii. 27, where by a corruption the name *Melunnaï* is found for Sibbechai, a corruption all the easier to account for in the similarity of the characters that form the names. He was a Zarihite, and belonged to the tribe of Judah.

Ver. 12.—For Abiezer, of the tribe of Benjamin, see ch. xi. 28; 2 Sam. xxiii. 27. For Anetothite (*Anathoth*) see ch. vi. 60 (45); Josh. xxi. 18; Jer. i. 1; xi. 21; xxxii. 7—9.

Ver. 13.—For Maharai, of the tribe of

Judah, see ch. xi. 30; 2 Sam. xxiii. 28. The Netophathite. Though the name of the town Netophah happens to occur only after the Captivity (e.g. Ezra ii. 22; Neh. vii. 26), yet the name of the people, as in this passage, was evidently a name existing before the Captivity (see also ch. ii. 54; ix. 16).

Ver. 14.—For this Benaiah, who was of Ephraim, see ch. xi. 31; 2 Sam. xxiii. 30. For Pirathon, see Judg. xii. 15, where alone the place is mentioned.

Ver. 15.—For Heldai, who belonged to Judah, see ch. xi. 30, where the name appears as *Heled*, and 2 Sam. xxiii. 29, where it appears as *Heleb*. For Othniel (who was nephew and son-in-law of Caleb, and first deliverer of the people after Joshua), see Josh. xv. 17; Judg. iii. 9. These twelve captains then come—from Judah seven, from Benjamin and Ephraim two each, and from Levi one.

Vers. 16—22.—These verses give the names of the *rulers* (ver. 16), or *princes* (ver. 22), of ten out of the twelve *tribes of Israel*. The tribes not mentioned are Gad and Asher, an omission which reminds of that of the two tribes Dan and Zebulon from the genealogies contained in ch. iv.—vii., and equally unexplained. These designations *ruler* (רֹאשׁ) and *prince* (רֹאשׁ) are the same as are found in the list of vers. 1—15—the former in ver. 4, and translated also as here “ruler;” and the latter in vers. 1, 3, 5, 8, under the Authorized Version word of “captains.” This rehearsal of the *rulers* or *captains* of the tribes stands evidently in no special relation to the preceding military enumeration, but it forms naturally enough one of four lists in this chapter that purport to set forth David’s complete arrangement of the affairs of the kingdom. So far as the enumeration goes, it appears to aim at fulness and no omission, for the “Aaronites” (ver. 17) are given, and *Ephraim* and the two halves of *Manasseh* separately (vers. 20, 21).

Ver. 17.—It is, perhaps, remarkable that Hashabiah—presumably a Gershonite—is not distinguished from the Hebronite (i.e. Kohathite) of the same name (ch. xxvi. 30); some, however, think that our *Hashabiah* is the Kohathite (see Smith’s ‘Bible Dictionary,’ i. 759 b). For Zadok, see ch. vi. 4, 12. He was of the line of Eleazar.

Ver. 18.—David’s eldest brother Eliab is no doubt intended here by the name Elihu. The Septuagint gives Eliab. For Michael, see ch. vii. 3.

Ver. 21.—There is no reason to doubt that Jaasiel is the son of the Abner who was Saul’s own cousin (ch. ix. 36; 1 Sam. xiv. 50).

Ver. 22.—These thirteen princes of the tribes of Israel were presumably in each

case those who represented the tribe according to lineal descent in David’s time. Though Gad and Asher are left out, the thirteen are filled up by the allowance of two for Levi, viz. one for the Levites and one for the priests; and three for Joseph, viz. one for Ephraim and two for the divided tribe of Manasseh.

Ver. 23.—The contents of this and the following verse may be supposed to be suggested by the distinct reference to the matter of number in the first verse of the chapter, and in the latter halves of the following fourteen verses, contrasting with the utter absence of any allusion to the same matter, when the whole body of the *tribes and their princes* are the subject, in vers. 16—22. The deeper significance of the latter part of this verse probably comes to this, that God had already given his people the proudest name for their numbers, in saying that they should be *numberless*, like to the stars of the heavens, and perpetually on the increase.

Ver. 24.—It seems a little surprising to read of Joab, fixed on the page of history as the person who began to number, but . . . finished not, when we have been already particularly told that it was *he* to whom King David’s command to number was “abominable” (ch. xxi. 6). However differently enough from the method of either nature or mankind, the antidote has here preceded the evil. For because there fell wrath for it, read the Hebrew, *and there was for this wrath upon Israel*. The last sentence of the verse purports to say that such numbering as had been done before the point at which Joab stopped was not honoured by a place, where other numbers were found, in the register of the chronicles of King David.

Vers. 25—31.—These verses have for their primary object, not to give an exhaustive summary of the wealth of David and the sources thereof, but to give the names of those persons who were charged with the care, or the management and care, of it. The classification, however, is interesting, and may be naturally expected to be tolerably complete. We do not find any distinction made between such property as might have belonged to David as private property, and such as belonged to him as king—probably because there was none worth making.

Ver. 25.—For storehouses, read, as in former clause, *treasures*. The suggestion of the second half of this verse in comparison with the first is that Azmaveth’s charge was over treasures in Jerusalem. For the castles, see 2 Chron. xvii. 12; xxvii. 4. The word *תְּמִימָה*, though the same in both clauses, may probably enough cover precious treasure, as of gold, silver, costly raiment,

etc. (1 Kings xiv. 26; xv. 18), more particularly in the first clause, and grain, fruit, etc. (2 Chron. xi. 11), in the latter, for the word has distinctly this double application. (See for some illustration of this verse also, Sallust, 'De Bello Jugurth.,' xii.)

Ver. 26.—This verse appears to give the name, not (as in the former verse) of the person who had charge of the stored grain, fruits, etc., but of the chief superintendent and manager of the labour and labourers of the field.

Ver. 27.—This verse specifies the officer who had the management of the vineyards, and also the officer who had charge over the wine-cellars. The description of Ramathite does not assist us to identify Shimei, though the choice of place is ample (Josh. xiii. 26; xviii. 25; xix. 29, 36; Judg. xv. 17). For Shiphmite, see Numb. xxxiv. 10, 11; to the place Shepham, mentioned in which passage, the reference here may be. For over the increase, read over that which in the vineyards, etc., where the initial *v* stands for *וּנְ*.

Ver. 28.—A similar couple of officers to those of the last verse are described here. By the low plains here in the Authorized Version is translated what had been better left untranslated, *i.e.* the *Shephelah*, one of the five divisions of Judaea (Conder's 'Bible Handbook,' 2nd edit., 1880, p. 257). It comprised the low-lying tract of land on the coast and, roughly speaking, stretching from Joppa to Gaza. The sycamore tree (*סְכָמֵרָה*), a plural masculine, and once *סְכָמֵרָה*, a plural feminine, Ps. lxxviii. 87) is to be distinguished from the *sycamore*, being that kind of *mulberry* tree called *fig mulberry*. The Septuagint, however, does not observe the distinction, and always translates *συκάμινος*. It was a common tree, and useful to the poor. It is the same with the *black mulberry* of Egypt, and abounded in Palestine (1 Kings x. 27). Its fruit was eatable, and its wood, though soft, yet valuable for enduringness (see Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' iii. p. 1394; Conder's 'Bible Handbook,' 2nd edit., pp. 223, 399; Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' edit. 1866, pp. 146, 393). The name *Baal-hanan* comes first before us as that of a King of Edom (Gen. xxxvi. 38, 39; ch. i. 49). The place *Gederah* (Josh. xv. 36), or *Beth-gader* (ch. ii. 51), attached to the name of the present *Baal-hanan*, renders it not less probable that he was of similar extraction.

Ver. 29.—*Sharon* (see ch. v. 16, 21). It means with the article, which, with one exception, always accompanies it, "the level land," and on the west of the Jordan exactly corresponds with the *Mishor* on the east, a word of identical signification with *Sharon*. The tract of pasture-land which

it designated stretched from Carmel to Joppa (Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' edit. 1866, pp. 485, 260, 264). The valleys here intended are not specified.

Ver. 30.—Whether the word *Obil* (עָבֵיל), is a proper name or not, it signifies "a tender of camels" by derivation. The task suited the Ishmaelite, no doubt! Nothing is known of the Meronothite, nor of the situation of the place called Meronoth, unless anything may be conjectured from Neh. iii. 7.

Ver. 31.—For the *Hagerite* tribe, see ch. v. 10, 18—22. For the rulers of the substance, the Hebrew words are *שָׁרֵן לְבִיאָה*. The number of them adds up again to twelve; Keil justly supposes that the two named in ver. 25 were those principal officers to whom the other ten delivered the proceeds of their respective charges.

Vers. 32—34.—These verses contain the names of seven men of high position, and who were, at all events, important enough, in one respect or another, for this closing special mention. 1. *Jonathan* and *Ahithophel* are singled out as counsellors (*רְגִזִּים*) of the king. 2. *Hushai* the *Archite* is mentioned as the companion (*עַמְלֵךְ*) of the king. 3. *Jehoiada* the son of *Benaiah*, and *Abiathar* are mentioned as standing in a similar relation of counsellors to the king with *Ahithophel*, but after him. 4. The great general of the whole army of the king (*לִרְאֵבָן*), *Joab*, has a place found for his name. 5. And the name of *Jehiel* is mentioned as of one with the king's sons. The first thing which may be observed as to this enumeration is that it is not one whole belonging to the later portion of David's time. *Ahithophel* had long before put an end to his own life (2 Sam. xvii. 21—23; also see xv. 12, 31, 34; xvi. 20—23). Secondly, that out of the seven names, four or five are already well known to us in some other capacity; for see the lists of ch. xviii. 14—17; 2 Sam. viii. 16—18; xx. 23—26. And thirdly, that in one or two instances, a different or additional part is assigned to the names mentioned. The impression left with us is rather of honourable or special mention made of seven who had been distinguished helpers of the king or the kingdom at one time or another.

Ver. 32.—Nothing is known of any uncle to *David*, named *Jonathan*, but special mention is made, in ch. xx. 7 and 2 Sam. xxi. 21, of a nephew, son of *Shimea*, who rendered valuable service, and whose name was *Jonathan*. It is possible that the Hebrew *נָכֵן* may mean "nephew," as simply meaning "relative." It must be admitted, however, as very remarkable, that in *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, the historical books,

Jeremiah, and Amos, to the number of sixteen times in all, the word confessedly means "uncle;" while this seventeenth time, it would appear to mean "nephew." On the other hand, in Proverbs, Canticles, Isaiah, Ezekiel, to the number of thirty-six times in all, the word follows its other branch of signification of "love," and in particular "one beloved." Nothing certain can be said of the Jehiel of this verse, but, if a son of Hachmoni, we may presume him to have been related to Jashobeam of ver. 2 and ch. xi. 11.

Ver. 33.—For Hushai the Archite, see 2 Sam. xv. 32, 37; xvi. 16; xvii. 14, 15.

Ver. 34.—The *after* of this verse may possibly be the *after* of time, *i.e.* after the *death* of Ahithophel, instead of the *after* of place, *i.e.* subordinate. Jehoiada the son of Benaiah. Either the individual of ver. 5; ch. xviii. 17; 2 Sam. viii. 18; xx. 23, is not the person here intended, or we have here the names accidentally reversed. There seems no sufficient reason to doubt that the high priest of the Ithamar branch is here meant.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 23.—*The increase of Israel.* A devout mind will ever acknowledge that not only individual, but also national, prosperity is from God. It was a conviction with all the pious Hebrews that their nation had been selected by a special decree and appointed to a special purpose. This conviction came to their minds to sober them in times of national prosperity, and to comfort and fortify them in periods of affliction, disaster, and captivity.

I. WHEN THIS PROMISE WAS GIVEN. It was given at the very commencement of Israel's life; it was given to Abraham, the father of the faithful. The Lord showed Abraham the stars of heaven, and assured him that so numerous should be his seed.

II. HOW THIS PROMISE WAS REGARDED. It was not likely that an assurance so inspiring, so glorious, should be forgotten; it was embodied in national tradition; it was enshrined in sacred literature; it was fitted to dignify their conception of their calling as a people; and it was a rebuke to their national pride. As on the occasion referred to in the text, it was designed to lead them to place their hopes, not so much in their own strength or fortune, as in the purpose and the promises of the God of Israel, the God of all the nations of the earth.

III. IN WHAT WAY THIS PROMISE WAS, AND IS YET TO BE, FULFILLED. Under Solomon the nation of Israel reached its highest pitch of fame and power. But it is pleasant and encouraging to believe that the promise recorded in the text will be fulfilled in a deeper sense than that which appears on the surface. There is a true Israel, composed of all who, sharing Abraham's faith, are Abraham's spiritual children. These are destined to be numerous as the sands of the desert, as the leaves of the forest, as the dew-drops of the morning, as the stars of heaven. This is a kingdom whose subjects shall ever multiply, whose glory shall know no limit and no end.—T.

Vers. 25—31.—*Earth's produce.* David was a man of war, and it is not surprising that these historical books are largely occupied with an enumeration of his armies, catalogues of his mighty men of valour, and records of his military exploits. But it is interesting and instructive to observe that the chronicler does not pass unnoticed matters which give an aspect of peace and prosperity to David's reign. The king was not only a commander and a judge, but also an administrator and an economist. The chronicler, in referring as he does in this place to the accumulation of wealth and to material prosperity generally, indicates that in his judgment a nation's greatness does not consist simply in the number of its warriors or the brilliance of its feats of arms.

I. THE PRODUCE OF THE EARTH IS FROM THE LORD. There are here enumerated the stores of corn, the vineyards and the oliveyards, the flocks, the camels, and the herds which largely constituted David's wealth. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

II. THE GIFTS OF GOD'S BOUNTY ARE TO BE RECEIVED WITH GRATITUDE. The Creator has made all things for man's use and comfort. "He hath put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, all beasts of the field." To him daily thanks are due.

III. THE GIFTS OF GOD ARE TO BE ENJOYED WITH TEMPERANCE AND SOBRIETY.

When the creature is abused, the Creator is dishonoured; but a just and temperate use of material wealth is improving to man and honourable to God.

IV. THE POSSESSOR OF MATERIAL WEALTH SHOULD CONSECRATE ALL TO THE GIVER. Christians especially, who are "not their own," are bound to regard and to use all their property as God's. So used, it will not minister to pride, but will become a means of grace. In this certainly David has set us an example worthy of imitation.—T.

Vers. 1—34.—*Wisdom, kindness, and folly.* In reading this chapter we are struck with three features of David's rule. 1. The presence of royal wisdom in: (1) Securing the safety of his kingdom by a sufficient militia without sustaining a burdensome standing army. One month's practice in the year would suffice to maintain their soldierly qualities without seriously interfering with their civil pursuits (ver. 1). (2) Adopting the system of promotion by merit. In the list of captains (vers. 2—15) we meet with names of men that had distinguished themselves by their courage and capacity, and who had "earned their promotion." Favouritism is a ruinous policy, and fatal to kings and ministers. (3) Limiting his own personal requirements to a moderate demand. David lived as became such a king as he was, but he did not indulge in a costly and oppressive "civil list" (see vers. 25—31). (4) Choosing so sagacious a counsellor as Ahithophel (2 Sam. xvii. 1—3, 14), and so true and brave a friend as Hushai (2 Sam. xvii. 7—14). 2. The presence of personal kindness. Although David acted, most wisely, on the principle that the highest posts should be reserved for the most capable men and those who "deserved well of their country," yet he did not neglect his own kindred in the hour of his opportunity. We find, amongst others of the foremost men, the names of his relatives, Asahel (ver. 7); Jonathan, his uncle (ver. 32); Joab (ver. 34). 3. The presence of royal folly. We are reminded here of the grievous error, the disastrous departure from rectitude, when, notwithstanding the wise counsel and somewhat strenuous opposition of Joab, he insisted on numbering the people (vers. 23, 24). Regarding the folly of the king, we learn—

I. THAT HUMAN NATURE, EVEN AT ITS BEST, BEARS THE STAIN OF IMPERFECTION. Devout and humble as David was, prosperous and beneficent as was his reign, he yet fell, more than once, into sin; and on this occasion (of the numbering) he involved the nation in a terrible calamity. He resembled all other good men of every age. Human excellency is a beautiful but a blemished thing; it has admirable qualities, but is never without defects; it halts somewhere. Therefore: 1. Let us conclude that there is certain to be something in ourselves which needs to be corrected; we also, though we possess the *mens conscientia recti*, have faults which others see and which they regret to see in us. 2. Let us not be hasty in estimating the character of others; if we judge men by the first thing we see in them, it may be that we shall apprise them by the one pardonable fault behind which, unrecognized by us, hide a hundred virtues. We should not like to be judged by the first action our neighbours chanced to witness in us. 3. Let us make all kindly allowance for men when we know them; and placing their many solid graces against their few superficial failings, let us not withhold our esteem, or our confidence, or our affection. Regarding David's kindness, we learn—

II. THAT WE DO WELL TO USE OUR OWN ELEVATION TO SERVE OUR KINDRED. Nepotism is a crime as well as a sin, but, when other things are equal and when opportunity offers, we should surely remember those whom, by the ties of affinity, God commands to our kindness, and those whom, by profession of friendship in earlier and humbler days, we promised to assist. And in view of the king's wisdom, we may learn—

III. THAT GOODNESS AND WISDOM TOGETHER ARE A SOURCE OF INCALCULABLE BENEFIT. David without his *devoutness* would have been nothing to his country or his kind; without his *wisdom* he would have been little more. Piety and prudence together are a power for God and man.—C.

Vers. 1—34.—*The army, tribal princes, royal possessions, and chief counsellors of the king.* This chapter brings before us the organization of the army, and also the public administration (vers. 1—15); next we have a list of the princes of the twelve tribes (vers. 16—24); then we have the managers of the domains and royal possessions (vers. 25—31); and lastly, the chief counsellors of the king (vers. 32—34). These

subjects follow the arrangement of the Levites' service, because it was David's earnest desire before his death to give the constitution of his kingdom a more stable form. David's object in numbering the people, as we may gather from the twenty-third verse, was to leave his kingdom, strong within and without, to his son. There were twelve divisions of the army, consisting of twenty-four thousand men in each. In the enumeration of the tribal princes, the tribes of Gad and Asher are omitted without any reason being assigned for the omission. With regard to David's domains and possessions, the property and income of the king were divided into treasures of the king, treasures in the country, in the cities, the villages, and the castles. The treasures of the king were the treasures of the royal palace in Jerusalem. The remaining treasures were fields, vineyards, plantations, cattle, camels, asses, and sheep. Officers were set over these various departments. With reference to David's counsellors (vers. 32—34), we have here enumerated three catalogues, and the mention of Joab as the commander-in-chief of the army.—W.

Ver. 23.—*God's promises checking man's wilfulness.* The impulse on David leading him to number Israel has never been adequately explained. Probably there were some peculiar national conditions which are not detailed. The connection of the reference to the "numbering," which is made in this verse, intimates that it was a part of some military arrangements which the king was advised to make. Possibly in order to fix the amount of his standing army, he desired to know the number of men in his kingdom who were above the age of twenty, the age from which military service was required. Eastern writers give curious illustrations of the Oriental prejudice against numbering possessions. "The apprehension of a Nemesis on any overweening display of prosperity, if not consistent with the highest revelations of the Divine nature in the Gospels, pervaded all ancient, especially all Oriental religions. David's act implied a confidence and pride alien to the spirit inculcated on the kings of the chosen people." What does come prominently out in the narrative is that David was *wilful* in the matter, but that God kept his very wilfulness under some limitations and restraints. David was kept from taking a complete census, because he felt it irreverent to attempt to count what God was understood to have promised should be *countless*. David's own heart, as well as Divine judgments, brought to him the conviction of his wilfulness and sin. Apply to modern phases of religious life and religious work. In both we are so keen to observe, and so anxious to reckon up and boast of, the *results* of our work. The individual Christian wants to count and value the steps of his personal spiritual growth; and the Christian worker, in his varied spheres, despairs if he cannot show the actual fruitage of his toil, thinking there will be no harvest from his seeding if his own hand does not bind the sheaves. Much may be said, and much may be said severely, of the almost *mania* that possesses some Churches for "numbering the people," and counting up the net gains of Christian work. In both spheres God's promises should check this desire to count.

I. APPLY TO PERSONAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE. God has promised to "bring us off more than conquerors;" to "perfect that which concerns us;" to give us "more grace;" to ensure us "all sufficiency in all good things;" and to be "with us always;" so there is no need for constantly testing our own spiritual state, and trying to gain assurance by counting the steps upward which we may have made. Our best help is the (1) *faith* that daily keeps "looking off" unto Jesus; (2) the *prayer* that keeps us mindful of, and ever pleading, the promises; and (3) the "*work*" for Christ which so thoroughly absorbs us that we have no time to think about our own feelings.

II. APPLY TO CHRISTIAN LABOURES IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD. God has promised abundant fruitage as the result of faithful Christian toil: a wondrous harvest-home, and not one sheaf missing. It is enough. Why should we trouble about results, and count up converts? Let them be as many as ever God wills, and let us be satisfied with the joy of our working, and the smile of our Master which surely rests upon us in the doing.

Still, as in the older days of David, there is grave reason to fear that *numbering results* tends to nourish human pride and conceit, and sets men upon boasting of the "great Babylon which they have builded." The most essential quality of Christian work is the *meekness of self-forgetfulness*, that will be wholly amazed if, one wondrous

day, God should point to sheaves safe in his garner, and say, "These were gathered in by thee." True and humble hearts learn to leave all the "numbering" work to God, and to the great revealing day.—R. T.

Vers. 25—31.—The trust of riches. In these verses some of David's wealth is enumerated, especially that portion which consisted in estates, herds, and flocks. Accepting life on the earth as the sphere of our "probation," or "moral training," we need to see that all things which bear their influence upon us may be, and indeed are, used by God as agencies in this gracious work over which he presides. Riches, therefore, may be a Divine trust committed to some men with a distinct view to their culture through this trust; and it is precisely this view of riches which needs to be more generally taught and apprehended, so that it may become a most solemn thing for any man to have this trust, and all who have it may be much more impressed with the responsibility of it than with the *advantage* and *privilege* of it. We easily take up with two imperfect notions. 1. We say that *riches are tokens of Divine favour*. But this may not be assumed as a universal fact. Riches *may be* a token of Divine wrath and judgment, and the very agency of a man's punishment. And riches *may be* a sign of God's anxiety about our moral state, and the need for subjecting us to some severe moral testing. To some natures no more searching test could be found than the trust of prosperity and wealth. 2. Or we say that *riches are the rewards of virtue*, and assume that men must be acceptable to God because they are rich, and that others must be out of acceptance, seeing that they are poor. But then we must face the difficulty which the Psalmist Asaph felt so bitterly (Ps. lxxiii.)—the *wicked* are often the rich, and the *righteous* are among the down-trodden poor. It is evident that no general rule will fit all cases, and that, in wise Divine orderings, wealth and poverty are arranged for the highest good of the individual and the permanent good of the whole. Did we know all, we should never envy those to whom God entrusts the riches. Neither of these conceptions is sufficiently true to be accepted without due consideration of certain other and important representations, such as (1) that riches may be Divine *judgments*; (2) that riches may be Divine *trials*; (3) that riches always are Divine *trusts*, of which due account will presently be required. Then attention needs to be directed to three things in relation to our riches: (1) *The wise care of them*, as not ours, but God's; (2) *the faithful use of them*, as not given to us *for our sake*, but for the sake of others, whom we may bless by means of them; and (3) *the watchful culture of the soul's life while in the enjoyment of them*, seeing that the precise peril of them is that they tend to nourish a *self-confidence* which is fatally injurious to the soul's health and life. Illustrate from the parable of the farmer who was getting over-rich, and had no storehouses large enough for his harvests, but who was *not rich toward God*. And see the counsels given to the rich by the Apostle James.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The contents of this chapter may be said to form one scene with those of the next up to ver. 25. They represent David in the presence of a magnificent company of witnesses, the flower of the Church, the military and the civil elements of his kingdom, devolving upon his son both the building of the temple and the throne itself.

Ver. 1.—One Hebrew word (*רַבָּ*) stands for the *princes* (twice), *captains* (three times), and *stewards* (once) of this verse. The classification of the verse speaks for itself. There are the *princes of Israel*; *i.e.* the *princes of the tribes* (ch. xxvii. 16, 22).

Otherwise the former of these expressions may be of an entirely generic kind, and apply to all that succeeds. There are, *secondly*, the *princes of the twelve military companies* . . . by course of the months (ch. xxvii. 1—15). *Thirdly*, there are the *princes of thousands and hundreds* (Deut. i. 15; 1 Sam. viii. 12; xvi. 18; xviii. 13; xxiii. 7; ch. xii. 14; xxvii. 1). There follow, *fourthly*, the *prince of all the substance and cattle of the king*, and (as seems to be added here) of his sons. There can be no doubt that the Hebrew text does say this, and does not merely register the fact of the attendance and presence of the sons of the king, as also it does not specialize the attendance of Solomon himself, though it is certain that he was present. Otherwise

it may be doubtful, considering the facts of the occasion, and comparing ch. xxix. 24, whether the original document is not misrepresented here. Next, *fifthly*, mention is made of the officers (כָּרִים), the Hebrew for which word generally means "eunuch," and such use of it must have become much more familiar during and after the Captivity, and, therefore, of course, at the time of the compilation of this work; but it does not necessarily mean it. Eunuchs are never mentioned elsewhere in David's reign. There is no reason to suppose the word means "eunuch," for instance, in Gen. xxxvii. 36; xxxix. 1; 1 Sam. viii. 15; 1 Kings xxii. 9; 2 Kings xxiv. 12; xxv. 19; Jer. xxxiv. 19. Under any circumstances, it would seem unnecessary that such *officers* of a royal establishment as eunuchs should be summoned under that description to an assembly of this kind. *Sixthly*, the mighty men (ch. xi. 10-25) were called to the assembly. And perhaps a *seventh* division may be made of all the valiant men (ch. xi. 26-40), who belonged to other places, or who were at this time more especially in Jerusalem, as residents.

Ver. 2.—The expression, David the king stood up upon his feet, probably means to emphasize the fact that hitherto, having been in a sitting or recumbent position, owing to his age and infirmity, he now with effort forced himself to *stand* in the presence of the unusual congregation and in consideration of what he felt was due to the occasion. He had not lost the man and the brother in his official and exalted rank, and, following ancient precedents (Gen. xxix. 4; Judg. xix. 23; 2 Sam. xix. 12), he addresses the congregation as *my brethren, and my people*. David says he had it in his heart to build a house of rest, *i.e.* an abiding house (Ps. cxxxii. 8, 14) for the ark of the covenant, instead of the moving one, and for the footstool of our God. By this he means the mercy-seat, to which especial allusion is made ver. 11 (רְשָׁעָת־תְּהָ). God is often spoken of as "*dwelling* between the cherubim," and sometimes (Ps. xcix. 1) as "*sitting* between the cherubim," which were over the *lid* of the ark, called the mercy-seat.

Ver. 3.—The contents of this verse are stated, as already seen, even more forcibly in ch. xxii. 8; while far less forcibly in 2 Sam. vii. 5; 1 Kings v. 5.

Ver. 4-7.—David mentions himself as the elect of God among all the members of his father's family, and from thence is led to trace the call from the first, by the following steps:—The tribe of *Judah* (Gen. xlix. 8; ch. v. 2); the *house of Jesse* (1 Sam. xvi. 1); thirdly, of *himself* (1 Sam. xvi. 13); and lastly of *Solomon* (ch. xxii. 9, 10; xvii. 11-14; 2 Sam. vii. 12-16). The exact

time and method of David's receiving the identification of Solomon as the *son to succeed him*, is nowhere given. The throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. This expression, not found in its entirety elsewhere, is an emphatic statement here of the true theocracy, which should have ever prevailed among the people of Israel, and which is now paralleled by the kingship of the Lord in his own Church (ch. xvii. 14; xxix. 23). The solemn and most distinct proviso, If he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day, reminds us of Ps. cxxxii. 12. This proviso is emphatically presented again to the attention of Solomon, when the time comes for the direct appeal of God to him (1 Kings iii. 14; viii. 61; ix. 4).

Vers. 8-10.—The double charge of these verses, first to the people and then to Solomon, is full of force and majesty. Translate, Now therefore in the sight of all Israel—the congregation of the Lord, and in the hearing of our God ("Hear me," ver. 2), keep ye and study to do all the commandments of the Lord your God (Deut. iv. 21, 26; xxx. 19; Lev. xxv. 46; Jer. iii. 18). The expression, Know thou the God of thy father, for a practical knowledge and fear of God, is analogous with the expression, "Hear thou," for the matter of practical *obedience*; *e.g.* "If they *hear* not Moses and the prophets" (Luke xvi. 32). Although there are not very many instances of this use of the word "know," its antiquity and classical character may be considered guaranteed by such passages as Job xviii. 21; 1 Sam. ii. 12; Prov. iii. 6; Ps. xxxvi. 10; Jer. ix. 2; Hos. v. 4; vi. 3. The expression, "the God of thy father," evidently intended to be touching, is more fully given in ver. 20, "God, even my God, will be with thee," which in its turn reminds us of Paul's language, "But my God shall supply all your need" (Phil. iv. 19). The urgent entreaty on the part of David breathes in every sentence of it, thought, and a mode of presentation of it, feeling, and depth of conviction, with which we are familiar in his psalms. He speaks from his own varied, remarkable, and rich experience of the Divine care and jealous love, and from much personal experience of the deceitfulness of the heart, to Solomon, into whom, were it possible, he would pour the advantage of all he had learned, and from whom he would hide nothing of his intense and anxious solicitude. To the same strain he returns in ver. 20, but there with more exclusive reference to the undertaking of the building of "the house of the Lord," or the house for the sanctuary. One thing only fails, perhaps, to be made quite apparent from the language of David, *viz.* why he deemed it necessary

to urge so strenuously on Solomon the enterprise of building the temple and of carrying it to completion. With abundance of means and preparations so large already made, one might have supposed a young king and a young man would have needed little pressure and little exhortation. Nevertheless, in the manifest presence of David's words, it is very far from impossible to suppose the dangers and temptations of Solomon's position as constituting a serious risk.

Vers. 11—19.—These hints respecting the parts of the building that was to be, and respecting the furniture of it, will come in for fuller consideration in the fuller treatment of them, found in the narration of the actual construction of the building in 2 Chronicles compared with 2 Kings vi., etc. It is evident that David desired to make a solemn and set business of handing over even the patterns and plans. Nor is this under any circumstances wonderful, but least of all considering their Divine origin. The Divine original of the tabernacle and all its belongings (Exod. xxv.—xxx.; Heb. viii. 5) was not to be a neglected precedent as regards the greater temple. It is said that "David gave" these "patterns to Solomon his son" (ver. 11), and the form in which he gave them is explained in ver. 19. There we read, "The whole in writing from the hand of Jehovah upon me, he made me to understand—all the works of this pattern." Whatever we generally accept respecting the *writing* of the tables of the Law by the finger of God (Exod. xxiv. 12; xxxi. 18; xxxii. 15, 16; Deut. iv. 13; v. 5, 22; ix. 10), is at all events open for acceptance here. At the same time, the phraseology of our nineteenth verse is certainly not so uncompromising as that of the references just instanced from the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. The words of ver. 19 may be satisfied by the meaning that David was in such manner and degree "in the Spirit" (Rev. i. 10), that in the writing and the drawing of patterns his hand was entirely under the guidance of that Spirit. In either alternative, to hand over such documents and such "patterns" must have been felt by David and all present an act of which much should be made.

Ver. 11.—The patterns of six parts of the future building are here delivered over to Solomon. 1. The porch; *בְּאַלְמָנָה* (1 Kings vi. 3; vii. 6; Ezek. xl. 7; viii. 16; Joel ii. 17; 2 Chron. iii. 4, where we read that the length was twenty cubits, and the height one hundred and twenty cubits; viii. 12; xv. 8; xxix. 7, 17); Septuagint, *τὸν αἰλαμὸν τὸν* *ναὸν* generally, but in this verse *τὸν ναὸν* is all that appears. This *porch* was built on the east of the temple. 2. The houses

thereof; i.e. not of the porch, but of the whole building; *ναῶν*; Septuagint, *τὰν οἰκῶν αὐτοῦ*. The word "houses" in this place designates the "greater house," or "temple," or holy place of 2 Chron. iii. 5; 1 Kings vi. 5, 17; and the "inner house," or "oracle," or "most holy house," or "holy of holies," of 2 Chron. iii. 8; 1 Kings vi. 19—27. 3. The treasures thereof; *νεκτῖα*, a word found only here in this form, with a Chaldee termination in *-ת*; Septuagint, *τὰν οὐκχῶν αὐτοῦ*. The *treasures* were chambers for receiving gifts, and storing the treasures new or old of the temple. Which of the rooms that were built against the sides of the temple were set apart as these treasure-chambers is not known. Perhaps they were the three-storyed wings of the temple (1 Kings vi. 5). 4. The upper chambers thereof; *ὑπέρτατα*; Septuagint, *τὰν ὑπερφῶν* (for fuller treatment of these, see 2 Chron. iii. 9). We may only with confidence say of these chambers that they were *upper* chambers, but whether over the "oracle" as Keil and Bertheau think, or over the "porch," or the higher of those, that leaned against the sides of the main building, it is impossible to determine from such data as we at present have. 5. The inner parlours thereof; *άνθετά τετράγωνα*; Septuagint, *τὰν ἀποθηκῶν τὰν ἑσωτέρων*. There can be little doubt that these designate the lower rooms of the side buildings of the holy place, and perhaps also of the porch. 6. The place of the mercy-seat; *κάθισμα τοῦ ἔστιλασμοῦ*; Septuagint, *τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ ἔξιλασμοῦ*.

Ver. 12.—Bertheau, Keil, and some others regard the spirit here spoken of as referring to the spirit and mind of David, and Bertheau goes so far as to translate, or paraphrase, "the pattern of all that floated before his mind." Such manifest stress has been laid upon the two facts—that the patterns were of God's giving, and that they were now in such form that they could be given over into the hands of Solomon—that such an interpretation seems inadmissible. Rather translate, And the pattern of all which was by the spirit with him. For the courts of the house of the Lord, see 1 Kings vi. 36; 2 Chron. iv. 9. The chambers round about; *רְאַשְׁכּוֹת כִּיבָּה* (ch. xxiii. 28). There seems no necessity to suppose that these chambers were separate from the building. For the treasures, the correct translation is *the treasures* (ch. xxvi. 20).

Ver. 13.—This verse either continues the subject of the giving of the patterns, which will read rather harshly, as preceding the courses of the priests and the Levites, and could only mean directions or instructions for their interchange, etc.; or it may con-

tinue the subject of the “chambers round about” “for the treasures of the house of God,” etc., also for the convenience “of the courses of the priests,” etc., and “for all the work,” etc., and for keeping “all the vessels of service,” etc. Bertheau and Keil somewhat scout the former supposition, and adhere to the latter.

Vers. 14, 15.—The general meaning of these verses is that, if the question were one of gold, or one of silver, David assigned for each vessel and each part of the candlesticks, the proportionate weight of gold that was to be employed.

Ver. 16.—So too as regards the tables of shewbread, whether in sort of gold or of silver, he assigned the due weight of metal for either sort. We should have been at a loss to understand the plural here employed, showing more than one table (Exod. xxv. 23; 1 Kings vii. 48; 2 Chron. xxix. 18), but for 2 Chron. iv. 8, 19; in the former of which verses we read of “ten tables” being made and placed on “the right side and on the left, in the temple,” and in the latter verse, yet more distinctly, of “tables, whereon the shewbread was set.”

Ver. 17.—It is to be observed that the term basons (בְּגָזִים), which appear to have

been covered goblets, is only found here and in Ezra i. 10; viii. 27.

Ver. 18.—By the chariot of the cherubims, is of course not meant that the cherubim had a chariot, but that they constituted the chariot of Jehovah (Ps. xviii. 11).

Ver. 19.—This abrupt bringing in of David as the speaker himself has already had one illustration in ch. xxxiii. 5. (See on the matter of this verse, note on ver. 11; and comp. 2 Kings iii. 15 for the parallel of an expression which evidently intends to assert an *inspiring* hand of the Lord.)

Ver. 20, 21.—These verses, as above seen, continue and close David's urgent and last exhortation to Solomon. He has now done with admonition and urgent appeal, but he offers prayer for him (ch. xxix. 19).

Ver. 20.—David in this verse enlarges upon the certainty of God's faithful steady presence with Solomon and support of his work to the end.

Ver. 21.—In this verse David reminds Solomon what servants and helpers he has ready to hand on earth, as well as his God above—priests and . . . Levites, . . . all manner of workmen, . . . willing and skilful, . . . princes and . . . people.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—Well worth reproduction by the annalist of centuries afterwards was the solemn and inspiring scene pourtrayed in this and following sections. For the same reason that particulars, however gloriously interesting or terribly interesting, yet of merely individual concernment, are absent from the Chronicles, those of the highest national significance are sketched afresh, and engraved with deeper-cut lines. Much of the sorrow and misfortune of David, much of wherein he sinned, or was sinned against, would be inexplicably denied to the reader but for the steady observance on the part of the annalist—we doubt not under inspiration's guidance—of the principle that the nation's religious history is to be his grand subject, its lessons his theme. Well, too, might the religious teacher of a nation that had passed through a strange stretch of apostasy, a stranger severity of punishment on account of it, and had now, strangest of all, another offer of opportunity priceless in prospect, be supremely anxious to give all legitimate prominence to such a scene. History enabled them once more with fidelity to produce it. They rested in it themselves with delight. They longed to imbue the people with its spirit and its ancient original fascination. All things considered, the sun had scarcely risen, through the reign and whole life of David, on a day of more real grandeur, more essential honour to himself—certainly not among the number of those that were inevitably declining days, and their brightest, warmest suns, those of mellow light and temperature, subdued. Age was now a crown of glory to him. The experience of a life moderately long, of a reign remarkably long, of vicissitudes and events strangely varied, was dignity higher than anything artificial, than anything outward. And weakness of bodily force and limb brought out in greater relief the moral deference he had made all his own, while a nation attend his voice, and receive in a young son of his their future shepherd and king. Nor was David himself at all insensible to what was most peculiar, most characteristic in the scene. A word or two, an action or two, an attitude, betray his nervous appreciation of it. That day, that hour, that scene—what three ways met there and then! The *past* way of his people, and their undiscovered *future* path, and not least momentous that by which his *own departure* must forthwith be made.

In a scene of an exceptional character, with much of just importance in it, and of essential impressiveness, let us pause to note the main features.

I. THE ASSEMBLY ITSELF WAS ONE OF A DIGNIFIED CHARACTER. And the dignity of it was a true dignity. The assembly *represented* a nation. It represented the *worth* and the substance of a nation. It was not its idle wealth, its idle fashion, its idle glitter, its sinecurism, but the strong head and strong purpose and strong arm of the nation. There was *position* in abundance there, but it was that healthy position that comes of high office worthily filled, of doing a nation's work and of adjudged competence to do it. This assembly represented, therefore, the *diligence* of a united, happy, active people. And when we consider the purpose for which the assembly was gathered together, it undoubtedly bespeaks its highest honour as representative of the *order* and *obedience* of a divinely governed nation. There is no nation that is governed fit to be so named, that is not divinely governed, if only that be taken into account which is transpiring a very small depth below the surface. And this fact postulates *order*, a *listening* ear, and *obedience*. The government, the legislature, the nation that go on with but just a moderate workable amount of these, know a certain unsatisfactoriness, but they little know the *wreck* and absolute misery of ruin where the indispensable *minimum* is absent. On the other hand, the nation then most nearly touches the point of perfection when its order, attention, and obedience, as perfect as that of an army, are at the same time moral in their character and voluntary in their forthcoming.

II. SPECIAL ELEMENTS OF DIGNITY GATHER ROUND THE PERSON WHO CONVENES THIS ASSEMBLY. David is the centre of it; the chief, not to say the only speaker in it. Yet even he is not acting in his own name and right alone. He is the visible deputy of one far higher, and who is invisible. He is an aged man, and furthermore older than his years. Great is the contrast, wonderfully effective the contrast, between what he now is, putting off the armour, and what he once was, when he "assayed to go" in the improved armour of Saul, and "put it off" also (1 Sam. xvii. 39). The juvenility, the simplicity, the unexpectedness, the inexperience of that day are at the extreme antipodes of what he now is and feels. Then so ruddy and robust, of rude physical health, and of abounding energy of limb, but now with sunken eye and sallow cheek, only with difficulty able to rise from his royal chair, and "beside those things that are without" (2 Cor. xi. 28), more weighted still with the responsibilities of office and the accumulations of experience, and "the care of all the" nation. The figure of that "old man eloquent," but yet "more eloquent" in deeds through his whole life than in words even, must stand a sculpture of most defined and enduring outline against the Bible sky while the Bible lasts. But the life that was bounded by these two extremes had played a great part, and the tides had risen full and high and tumultuous, times without number, in it. Yet through all the conflicts, work, perils, and sins, and virtues of the life, a certain thread of continuity had been preserved, and indeed had preserved it. As the truest image often comes out clearest and best in death, so was it now. There had been a thing long in the heart of David. The decline of life speaks it out with extraordinary emphasis. And does he not then touch the highest point of his fame when, with the grand company in front of him, he rises with some effort, addresses those who listen to their father and their king, as "my brethren and my people," and shares with them the deepest wish and the most real ambition to which his life owned? How different this from the close of many careers! Nay, how very few are those who have the faith, the calm determination (or even the merciful opportunity given them), to put into the hand of another the secret of a brilliant future that had been thought of by themselves, longed for by themselves, but denied to themselves! When Paul wrote to Timothy he was a yet higher illustration of this, yet it must be taken into account that Paul was not disappointed as David was.

III. STATEMENTS OF EMINENTLY MORAL SIGNIFICANCE IN THE ADDRESS, IN WHICH DAVID NOW ADMITS ALL TO BE SHARERS OF HIS BOSOM'S DEAREST SECRET. 1. After a courteous appeal to all, addressing them under kindly titles to hear him, who might, from his office and age, have commanded, David credits the *sovereignty* of all the *kingdom* to *God*. The throne is "the throne of the *kingdom of the Lord* over Israel" (ver. 5). 2. *He credits all that he was himself*, all which had been given him, all to which he had been raised, to the *sovereignty of God*. These David traces through four stages. The Divine sovereign choice of the tribe of Judah, of the house of his father, of himself out of

all the rest of his father's family, and he carries it down to the designation of his favourite son Solomon, as successor to his throne. "Howbeit the Lord God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for he hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked me to make me king over all Israel: and of all my sons, (for the Lord hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his Father" (vers. 4-6). 3. *With the frankness of truth and the unmistakable singleness of aim of an aged man "ready to depart," David speaks out what had been his own pious design, his cherished resolve, and the actual preparation he had made for it.* "I had in my heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building" (ver. 2). It is to be noted that no matter of personal advantage, or of family advantage, or even of a noble ambition, but yet a mere ambition, is here concerned. It is the calm, correct, intelligent prompting of religion. No doubt the desire of David's heart carried to completion must redound to the honour and fame of himself and his family to all generations, and must be calculated to secure great practical benefit to a whole nation. Nevertheless it were a gratuitous maligning of a good heart to mistake these, or any of them, as the *motives* of David. He is learning and is illustrating the great though alphabetic *principles* that rule the man who distinctly believes in the invisible, and worships the invisible One. It is his right and due, it is justice, that a settled house, a permanent place of abiding, a worthy temple, be raised to him, and that nothing take real precedence of it. 4. With a different frankness, a frankness of perhaps even rarer sort, he withholds nothing of all that had passed between God and himself. He gives the *reasons*, correct and exact, on account of which his heart's desire is denied to him. It cannot be denied that there was something about them which a man less brave and strong might have inclined to suppress. There are things in life which, far from criminal, and far more misfortune than fault, nevertheless ask for a veil of kindly forgetfulness, and beg not to be thrust into prominence. But David tells all without disguise. It comes to this, that in the strongest of his days he had been very busy in work not of the most savoury, not of the most spiritual, not even of the most humane, and the stain of it cleaved to him—that stain the stain of blood. A very busy life in some directions often makes good works impossible at the time. But this is not necessarily the worst of it. The more significant and sad thing is that it does one or both of two other things. It either finally takes away all taste and disposition to do the work of higher goodness; or if, as with David now, it does not do this, yet it clothes the man against his will with a character of unsuitableness to it. In this neither is man censorious nor God unjust. But nature is vindicating its reality and strength, and another illustration is added of the truth, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This, then, is David's frank confession: "God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my Name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood" (ver. 3). 5. With grateful memory David records the promise that God had made in substitution for granting the exact desire of his heart. This promise of what should be done in and by Solomon was "the word on which God had caused David to hope." And reflection upon it was very food to him, commemoration of it was a welcomed and sacred duty. The promise had been given in close connection with a detailed reminder of how God had selected David, and called him, and made such a changed career for him, upon all that had naturally loomed before him (2 Sam. vii. 8-16). The whole scene and purport of that report that Nathan made to David in his interview with him, had stamped one clear, effective impression on his mind. And it is evident that his own address to the people and to Solomon now answers feature for feature to it. But in the centre of it was this promise about Solomon; all the rest clustered round it, and the grateful promise holds the central place now in David's memory and heart. 6. *The closing charge of David—a double charge, one to the people, one to their future king, one to the Church, the other to the minister, "the leader and shepherd of Israel."* (1). The charge to the *laity*. The very essence of impressiveness lies sometimes in the directness of personal appeal. There may be personal appeal without individual appeal.

Each in a large number shall sometimes sufficiently feel that the address is to himself. In the brief language of David much is contained. Its sententiousness is telling and emphatic. The great throng of human witnesses is instanced. The supreme omniscient Witnesser is pointed to, is well held up to view. "In the sight of all Israel the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God;" these are the imposing sanctions which precede the solemn burden itself of command or earnest exhorting. Then follows such exhortation—it is entreaty itself: "*Keep and seek for all* the commandments of the Lord your God." The rule for nation, leaders, ay, and for individual, if they are to be safe and sure, is thus constituted. *Obedience, inquiring obedience, and impartial, uniform obedience*, are the triple essentials of that wise and holy law. And the scriptural reward of obedience is set forth, and in that finer form to which Scripture gives, in one way or another, so unique a prominence, viz. the reward not to self and present time alone, but to the future and to generations yet unborn. This tendency to suggest the future, to point to it, and to urge the taking it into account, is one of the most noteworthy marks of the diviner methods of monition and impression. Where the subject-matter may make it impossible in one way, it will, if possible, insist on appearing in another way. "That ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you *for ever*." (2) The charge to his own loved son. Now all the father's heart and soul are moved. Every short clause, in its full, majestic Hebrew vocabulary, thrilled with the deep conviction and earnest persuasion that the abounding experience of an aged and holy father would bring to bear upon his son. What influences they are that offer themselves to produce an ever-remaining impression on the young man! At a moment when all the eyes of a vast and august assembly are bended on the young Hebrew prince, a solemn individual appeal is made to him. Again the beaming of the height of paternal love and pride is shining on him. Again the familiarly known earthly father's name is raised into union with the Name of the one Being above all: "Know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind." Then are brought into prominence the grand characteristics of that Being, as One "who searches all hearts, and perfectly understands all the imaginations of them." His gracious approachableness, if sought, and his deep offence and sure punishment, if neglected, are declared, till the close of all is reached. This consists (a) of the distinct admonition to *watch*; of the (b) suggestion of strong comfort and support that lie in the thought of the Lord's *choice* and *decree*; and (c) of the challenge, in the name of all which had gone before, to "**be strong and do it.**"

Vers. 12, 19.—Divine inspiration the guide of human work. These verses amount to a very real and very interesting assertion of Divine inspiration. The "things that float before the mind," to use Bertheau's words, without his meaning in them, may none the less be the fruit of inspiration. But beside and in addition to the mind's ordinary command of its own gifts, in addition to the exercise of reason, to the aids of the accumulations of experience, and of even some touch of foresight, which belong by nature to all, and which attach to some in a very high degree by training and by purity of mind, the Divine Spirit gives as he lists special impulses and sure guidance, an unusual discernment and unerring correctness of deliverance, and truth absolute betimes. The leading instance and type of such inspiration is to be found, no doubt, in those impulses and that Divine superintending and Divine informing of certain men's minds in the essential *matter* of spiritual truth, which by many an instalment and through a very long stretch of ages secured for us at last the grand total we now call our Bible. This may be called the inspiration of word or of *truth*; while that exercise of inspiration which the present passage leads us to notice might rather be designated the inspiration of work. There is, of course, nothing manifest to distinguish these in their *nature*, for the same gracious Spirit, the same mighty and heavenly Force, is in either case at work. But there are important and grateful thoughts suggested to us in the fact that the quickening, informing, revealing Spirit comes to our aid not only in the deepest and highest things that can touch soul, but in the literal works of our hands. Let us notice—

I. THE SPIRIT DOES NOT DISDAIN TO CO-OPERATE WITH MEN, IN SUGGESTING, SHAPING, AND COMPLETING THAT WHICH IS TO BE MADE BY THEIR HANDS, AND TO AFFECT THEM THOUGH THE MINISTRY OF THE SENSES. Though the inevitable and just inference in our

own minds herein is of the condescension of the Spirit, yet we need not pass over the consideration, that this is in keeping with an analogy that we might expect would be observed. As St. Paul teaches us forcibly, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, that they are to be adjudged worthy of the severest condemnation who refuse to learn the invisible things of God himself from his works visible in creation, so the Spirit would nourish in our *outer* works right methods of approaching the Being who must all the while be “worshipped in spirit and in truth.”

II. THE SPIRIT PUTS HONOUR ON THE EXPRESSION ON THE PART OF MAN OF HIS WORSHIP AND SERVICE OF GOD, EVEN IN THE OUTER REQUISITES OF THEM. That which has cost nothing of money, of skill, of thought, of care, is not what is to be offered to God. It would not be offered to those we loved or respected among our fellow-creatures, and yet less should it be offered to him.

III. THE SPIRIT HONOURS IN PARTICULAR THE EXACTITUDE AND PERFECTION IN ITS KIND OF WHAT IS GIVEN TO GOD. The *sacrifice* must be the young and the pure and the blemishless. And a similar principle must be observed throughout our service of God. But how often, how grossly, how notoriously, how self-deceivingly, is this plain principle disregarded by multitudes of professing Christians! To God is given last; to God the least; to God that which is too poor to keep or to give elsewhere.

IV. THE SPIRIT RECOGNIZES AND SUGGESTS OUR NEED OF PATTERNS. The Lord’s Prayer was one kind of pattern; the sermon on the mount was another kind of pattern; the sacred cross was another illustrious pattern; the directions given to the twelve disciples and again to the seventy, on their first missionary journeys, were a pattern; the Israelites were a pattern; John, Peter, and Paul were each respectively a pattern. And for the first solid temple that informed and intelligent worship of God ever reared, the Spirit gave the pattern, and pattern after pattern for details.

V. STILL THE SPIRIT GIVES BUT THE PATTERN. He does not supersede our active exertions, our best exertions, nor permits us to reckon on even *his* proxy. But he does *wait* to lead, offer to show and to *teach*, and above all in this particular way—the way of imparting *principles* of right action, of holy action, of beautiful action.

VI. THE SPIRIT GAVE THE TEMPLE MODEL, WHICH IN VERY DEED SPOKE PRINCIPLE IN EVERYTHING THAT MIGHT SOUND MOST LIKE DETAIL, BECAUSE THAT TEMPLE WAS ITSELF THE TYPE OF GOD’S CHURCH ON EARTH. No *exclusive* sanctity belonged to it. It and its lineal successors were to lie level with the ground. But its seed was to be as the stars of heaven, or as the sand upon the shore. “Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem,” meant no doom, no curse, no disparagement of the temple. Those words of Jesus spoke the charter of God’s Church, as a growing, an ever-growing, and a prevailing reality in the world. Literally innumerable have been already the copies after that type. And they have yet to be manifold more. The building itself was emphatically *not* an ordinary building, nor a mere building. The thought of it in David’s heart was *not* indigenous to that heart, nor was the execution of it to be liable to be dangerously ascribed either to his architecture, or his sons, or to that of the combined professional talent of the nation, or of all nations. No, it is unique. It has virtue in it. It, in the person of its successor, justifies Jesus’ admiration, and a share of his tears. It breathes and moves ubiquitously, and has life in it. And it was because it was necessary that it should have these endowments, that though David thought and gave and prepared, and a nation now banded as one man consented and gave and wrought enthusiastically, yet the Architect was God the Spirit.

Vers. 20, 21.—*The courage of age, and its grand advantages as grounded in experience.* Once more, then, the voice of the aged king and the aged father is heard. Its subject the same, its *tones* still more and more earnest, persuasive, imploring. Age calms, mellows, subdues, in *almost* all directions, but not literally in all.

1. WE ARE ARRESTED BY OVERHEARING THE URGENT TONES OF OLD AGE. The voice is not weak, does not tremble, lisps not, nor hesitates. It is firm, full of vigour, and rings again more musical than even of old. There must be some significant reason for this.

II. WE ARE ARRESTED BY SEEING TO HEAR AGE URGE IMPETUOUSNESS AND DARING ON YOUTH. Surely the five times repeated exhortation, “Be strong,” “of good courage,” “do it,” “fear not,” “nor be dismayed,” must betoken some very risky, presumptuous,

and even daring enterprise. And yet it is the old man who is pressing on the young man, appealing to him as though he would rouse him to an all but forlorn hope, instead of to a wise, prudent, and good work.

III. WE ARE ARRESTED BY HEARING IN THE MIDST OF THESE URGENT AND IMPASSIONED TONES PROMISES OF THE HIGHEST INDUCEMENT, AND THAT BORROW THE NAME OF HEAVEN AND GOD. A father's experience, encouragement, and entreaty may well weigh much with a son ; a father's savings, preparations, and enlistment through all the force of his influence, of much sure help from "princes and people," may well add inducement and confidence. But these are indefinitely exalted now by the challenge to believe that Heaven itself would work for and with Solomon. "The Lord God will be with thee ; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished."

IV. ONE LITTLE FAMILIAR WORD, AMID ALL THE REST, ARRESTS OUR EAR AND WARMS THE WHOLE APPEAL WITH THE TONE OF PERSONAL INTEREST. That little word is the one which counts so often for so much—the word "my." At the very crisis of invoking, in the great and terrible and reverend Name of "the Lord God," the very highest possible sanction, David does not forbear to link his own name with it : "The Lord God, *my* God, will be with *thee*." This is the same David who in many a psalm could sing in the very lowliest strain and confession of the demerit of man and his poverty and his sinful nature and sinful practice. Yet the two things are not inconsistent, and David does not do wrong. The God of all, of all worlds, the *universal* God, loves to be sought, to be clung to, to be *appropriated* by the individual. The poorer, the lowlier, the more solitary, so that his child's trust *corresponds* in thoroughness and tenacity with his condition of want, so much the more welcome is that child, and not a word shall be said to him that he *presumes*. Note, then, that in the happy expression of David to his son, "My God," we have: 1. *The creature's rightful and blessed appropriation of the Creator* ; the only all-sufficient, the inexhaustible and ever-communicating, the one strong support of everything within the compass of his dominions. 2. *The consecrated diminutive of affection*. The thing or the person I believe I *chiefly* love, that thing or that person I restlessly, ceaselessly long to call *mine, my own*. Nor is there a simpler, grander, juster use of this little word, the consecrate word of affection the world all over, than when a creature, sinner, penitent, poor, and dependent, breathes out from all that is within him "My God." 3. *The grateful outcome of tried experience*. Age gives the opportunity of valuable experience in many a direction, but in none so much as in those relations which subsist direct between man and his God. There is nowhere such room for experience to have its way, to grow and to attain results of surpassing value. After the *experience* that David had accumulated of God, and of what a God, God had been to him, he rightly desires to make a point of this to his son. It was not simply the *sentiment* of the father's God, one to be held to by the son ; it was no mere dictate of family pride, or of hereditary attachment to some *lares et penates*. No, the hard but telling facts of experience enable David to pledge and guarantee "*his*" God, as the good God and the wonderful God, and the safe God for his son. So Paul said to the Philippians, "My God shall supply all your *need*," in that he, above any living Christian of that time, had suffered peril, need, persecution (2 Cor. xi. 23—31), and had *found* God, the "very present Help and Refuge in time of trouble," whom the psalmist a thousand years before had tested. All distances of time, differences of dispensation, contrasts of character and of career, sometimes seem to meet in one place, one confession, and one adoration. Each utters, "My God," and all are found to have contributed the proof of a God unchangeable—"the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Meantime the experience and testimony of each helps to influence and instruct and strengthen the faith and love of some nearest by nature or by friendship. And to many a son Solomon has come, with equal truth and effect, the aged father's confession of what, through a long, a hard, a tried life, he has found his God to be. "The Lord God, *my* God, will be with *thee*." Happy the fathers who have such experience, and happy the children who hear their counsel in time. And happy for the long-favoured people of Israel, "blest beyond compare" already, if their new young king hear, and for ever heed, the advice of his aged and richly experienced father, and adopt *his* God for his own "even unto death."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 9.—Early piety. A father's solicitude for his son is too often confined to his temporal prosperity. It was not so with David. The aged monarch was indeed anxious for Solomon's stability on the throne, for his fitness to discharge all regal duties, for the magnificence of his public works, and for the splendour of his reign. But he was well enough acquainted with human nature to know that character is the key to life. His supreme desire was that his son should be right at heart, that his principles should be sound, that he should honour, trust, and serve his God. Hence the beautiful language of the text.

I. THE NATURE OF EARLY PIETY. It does not consist merely in outward associations or in outward observances. 1. The basis of such piety is knowledge. "Know thou the God of thy father." Hence the importance of early instruction in religious truth. 2. The substance of such piety is a cheerful service of God. The practical energies of youth need to be employed in doing the Lord's will. Willingness and cheerfulness should characterize all work done for God. It is well that the young should be trained to find their delight in the practical service of their God and Saviour.

II. THE MOTIVES TO EARLY PIETY. 1. The obligation of duty. It is right to "remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." 2. The assurance of the Lord's perfect knowledge: "For the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." 3. The encouragement of promise: "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." There are many similar assurances in Scripture fitted to encourage the young to seek the God of salvation. 4. The fearful alternative: "If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."—T.

Ver. 12.—The pattern of the Spirit. We sometimes make a great mistake in neglecting to remark the presence and operation of God in the ordinary and secular affairs of life. The Hebrews were in this respect in advance of us; they justly attributed all wise and good works to that Spirit from whom all wisdom and goodness proceed. Thus the workers in the construction of the tabernacle are expressly said to have received from the Spirit of God the knowledge and skill they needed to fulfil their undertaking, and in the passage before us David is represented as having received by inspiration from Heaven the plans upon which his son was to erect the temple of Jehovah.

I. THE PLAN OF EVERY GREAT AND GOOD WORK IS FROM GOD. That is, so far as it is good and great. There is human ignorance and human folly discernible in many noble enterprises; but the impulse of piety or benevolence to which they owe their being is from above. This is so either, as probably in the case before us, from a direct inspiration, or, as is usually the case, in a more ordinary manner. The inspiration of the Almighty giveth man understanding; and every high and holy purpose, every inspiriting truth and influence, should be traced up to the Giver of every good gift and every perfect gift.

II. SUCH PLANS SHOULD THEN BE FORMED WITH REVERENCE AND WITH PRAYER. If we would have the Spirit's guidance, we must ourselves be "filled with the Spirit;" we must seek his teaching in humility and docility of heart.

III. SUCH PLANS SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT WITH EARNESTNESS, AND WITH A LOWLY DEPENDENCE UPON THE GRACE AND AID OF GOD. In these respects the kings of Israel, who were concerned in the erection of the temple, stand before us as a bright example. It is only as all our works are "begun, continued, and ended" in God, that we can justly hope for blessing and prosperity.—T.

Ver. 20.—"Be strong." Worship and work together make up the expression, the manifestation, of religion. Where the heart has true, living faith in Christ, both these will be. Worship is the soul, and work the body, of the religious life. And the Lord Jesus is the Mediator of worship, and the Inspiration of work. David's closing admonitions to his son and successor naturally had respect to the high station he was about to occupy, and the great service he was about to render. Thus he set before Solomon a grand conception of the purpose of his future life, and glorious encouragement and

assurances to induce him to go forward with courage and with zeal. In these words we have—

I. A VIEW OF LIFE AS PRACTICAL AND STRENUOUS SERVICE. There is work for all true and loyal hearts, for all willing, active hands. We are all, as Christians, builders in the house, the temple, of the most high God. The edifice of our life and happiness, our influence and usefulness, is not to rise by chance or magic; it is to be reared by our own labour and diligence, our own perseverance and prayers. What dignity, beauty, and interest are lent to our life by the conviction that we are building in the Lord's house! Whether our life be public or private, whether our sphere of influence be home, or profession, or business; whether our relations to others be official or social,—we may all be builders under God.

II. ADMONITION AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO FULFIL LIFE'S WORK. As David spoke to his son in terms of fatherly sympathy and good cheer, so let the elder encourage the younger in the service of their God and Saviour. 1. *Observe the disposition which is to be avoided.* "Fear not, nor be dismayed." Some minds are naturally timorous. A nervous temperament, a diffident habit of mind, depressing circumstances, may account for this. Some are ever in dread of adversaries; others are more apprehensive of their own weakness and insufficiency. Accordingly, Scripture contains many dissuasives from timidity and faint-heartedness. "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." 2. *Observe the disposition to be fostered.* "Be strong and of good courage." To many of his servants, placed in critical positions, has the supreme Lord addressed such admonitions. "Be strong and of a good courage," Jehovah had said to Joshua and to Israel, in the prospect of their entering upon Canaan as their inheritance. A courageous heart can do wonders; it can even bear up a feeble body, contend with adverse circumstances, defy malignant opposition. We are not taught to place confidence in ourselves, but we are taught not to shrink from duty because of our felt inadequacy. Strength comes with a brave heart, a fixed resolution, a calm confidence in Divine grace and aid. 3. *Observe the admonition to action.* "Do it." David had prepared for the building of the temple; it was for his son to carry out the plans which had been made. It is for us all, as followers of Christ, not to dream or to purpose, but to act. We are gifted with active powers, and are called to an active life. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

III. PROMISES TO ANIMATE THE TRUE-HEARTED WORKER. Mere admonition and advice from fellow-men is insufficient. The question of practical moment for us, in our endeavours to serve, is this—Is there help from above? We have the answer in the text. 1. Divine presence and aid are assured. "The Lord God will be with thee." How far better than the presence and counsel even of a faithful earthly friend, a judicious earthly father! "Vain is the help of man." But "if God be for us, who can be against us?" 2. The same God who has been the dwelling-place of his people in all generations, is our God. It is very significant that David says, "Even *my* God." The memory of former interpositions, of the great works which God did in the days of our fathers, should hearten and cheer and comfort us. He is neither an unknown nor an untried God. 3. He will not fail or forsake his people until their work is finished. Other helpers may fail us, may be summoned from earth, or may prove unfaithful. We may fear lest God himself should depart from us. But he is faithful to all his promises. "The mountains may depart," etc. Solomon enjoyed the countenance, protection, and guidance of God until the temple was completed. God only knows what our life-work is to be; but we may all be assured that, if he has entrusted to us any service, he will not withdraw from us, he will not abandon our undertaking, until his purpose is fulfilled, until our work is done.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Let every hearer of the gospel obey the call, and enter without delay upon the Lord's work. 2. Let God's servants who are dismayed by difficulties and a sense of insufficiency betake themselves to the Word of God and to prayer.—T.

Vers. 1-8.—Lessons from the end. As the slain warrior in battle, finding his strength fast ebbing away, gathers up his remaining powers and deals one last mighty blow against some prominent enemy, so David, the soldier of the Lord, perceiving that his end was near, summoned all the force that was left to him to strike one more good

stroke in the cause of the God he had served and of the people whom he loved. From this scene at the end we learn many lessons.

I. THAT A NOBLE LIFE IS CROWNED BY ONE SUPREME EFFORT AT THE LAST. Thus did Moses crown his illustrious career (Deut. xxxi.—xxxiii.). Thus did Joshua worthily close his honourable course (Josh. xxiii., xxiv.). So, indeed, we may speak of our Lord himself; for by his passion and his death he wrought for the human race a far greater work than even *he* had accomplished by all the words and works of his life-ministry. It may well be our ambition to act in this spirit, if we do not adopt this particular method. "So much the more as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. x. 25).

II. THAT A TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS MAN WILL EARNESTLY CONCERN HIMSELF AS TO THAT WHICH COMES AFTER HIM. David was most solicitous to leave nothing undone that he could do to secure the happiness and well-being of Israel after his death; therefore he convened this great assembly and gave this solemn charge. In the same spirit he adjured them to do the one right thing, in order that, in their turn, they might "leave the good land for an inheritance for their children," etc. (ver. 8). The spirit of indifference respecting the days that will succeed our own is one which the disciples of Jesus Christ should be ashamed to cherish. It is profoundly unchristian; it is as far as it can be from the spirit of him who died that, after and through his death, there might be righteousness, joy, life, upon the earth.

III. THAT AUTHORITY AND AFFECTION GO WELL TOGETHER. "Hear me, my brethren and my people" (ver. 2). The king addresses his people as his brethren; it is in the fulness of his heart that he thus speaks. His soul is filled with an earnest and loving regard for them, and for the nation they represent; hence the affectionate term which he employs. It is well for all who are in authority to assure those whom they direct that they "have them in their heart" as well as in their hand; that they love them as "brethren" while they rule over them as their "people."

IV. THAT IT IS A GREAT THING TO BE WILLING TO SERVE THE LORD. "I had it in my heart to build an house of rest," etc. (ver. 2). "And the Lord said unto David . . . thou didst well that it was in thine heart" (1 Kings viii. 18). When a man purposes, with pure and complete integrity of soul, to do anything for the cause of Christ—to give largely, or to go far afield, or to work devotedly at home, or to spare some loved one, and when the providence of God interposes to prevent, is it not written in the record which is on high, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart"?

V. THAT IT IS A GREAT THING TO DO WHAT WE CAN WHEN OUR STRONGEST WISHES ARE DENIED. Perhaps it spoke most for the genuine piety of David that, when God said to him, "Thou shalt not build an house for my Name," etc. (ver. 3), he did not cease to "make ready for the building" (ver. 2), but continued to the end to store up all manner of precious things, that his son might have his labour lightened and might do his work with more completeness. So far from sulkily retiring because he could not have the very thing which he desired, David did the thing that he was permitted to do—the laborious but comparatively unhonoured work of preparation—cheerfully leaving the glory of building to one that should succeed him. How many are there who live in this later and brighter dispensation who might learn a lesson of cheerful continuance in well-doing from this Hebrew king!

VI. THAT MUCH IN HUMAN LIFE IS DECIDED BY THE ELECTING GRACE OF GOD. (Vers. 4—7.) He who chose the tribe, the family, the individual man, for the sovereignty of Israel, now chooses individual souls to be kings among men. By the mental and spiritual endowments he is pleased to bestow, by the teaching and training he is pleased to grant, by the privileges and openings he is pleased to afford, he marks out one rather than another for office, influence, power. He still "chooseth our inheritance for us" (Ps. xlvi. 4). Let the fact that he does so condemn pride, ingratitude, and envy.

VII. THAT MUCH IN HUMAN LIFE IS LEFT TO OUR DECISION. "*If he be constant,*" etc. (Ver. 7.) "Now therefore . . . keep and seek for all the commandments . . . that ye may possess," etc. (ver. 8). God proposes and arranges, but not without regard to our response to his invitation, our obedience to his commandments. Nothing in his ordering interferes with the conditions he has imposed. We reap that which we sow.—C.

Vers. 9, 10.—*A parental charge: a sermon to the young.* The scene is one of pro-

found interest, for it is one of deep and strong emotion. A father who feels that his end is near is delivering an earnest charge to his son, who has, as he hopes, a brilliant course before him. There is everything to add solemnity and pathos to the scene. The aged king excited to one last painful effort, the assembled princes of Israel, the "young and tender" Solomon (ch. xxii. 5) kneeling before his father, the outpouring of royal and parental tenderness and solicitude,—everything combines to make the occasion one of greatest interest. And what can be more impressive than the last injunction given by a departing father to the son who is his destined heir: who will, if any one does, carry on his work when he himself is removed? David's supreme desire is that Solomon shall be a faithful servant of God, and do the special work which awaits his care. We are invited to consider—

I. **IN WHAT TRUE PIETY CONSISTS.** It embraces two things. 1. A practical knowledge of God. "Thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God," etc. And this knowledge of God includes (1) an intelligent understanding of his nature and his attitude toward the children of men. We must have some mental apprehension of him; we must understand that he is a holy, pure, ever-present, all-observant Spirit; claiming our reverence, love, obedience, and submission; condemning our ingratitude, our departure from himself, our sin; ready to receive, forgive, restore all who return to him in penitence and faith. (2) A direct, practical acquaintance with him. Such acquaintance as is gained by coming to him in personal approach; by contact of our spirit with his Spirit; by the prayer, the pleading, the surrender, which is not formal but spiritual—not "after the flesh," but from the soul; for "the Lord searcheth all hearts," etc. 2. Continuous spiritual service. "Serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind." Having found his favour and entered into his kingdom, we must live continuously in his service. We must render this "with a gladsome mind," not constrainedly and as of necessity, not hypocritically, not servilely, but cheerfully and heartily—the obedience of love, of those who are satisfied if he is pleased. This our service is (1) to be lifelong; (2) to cover all the particulars of our life, extending to all our human relationships and all our various spheres of activity.

II. **WHAT POWERFUL INDUCEMENTS WE HAVE TO DEVOTE OURSELVES AT ONCE TO GOD.** These are four in number. 1. Strong filial considerations urge us to do so. David pleaded with Solomon to "know the God of his father." The young prince must have felt that if he gave his life to the service of God, he would be (1) delighting the heart of his beloved father, and (2) treading closely in his honoured parent's footsteps; in both ways acting worthily and "as became his father's son." The same or similar considerations should be potent and prevalent with ourselves. 2. By so doing we may hope to accomplish great things. Solomon had the prospect of "building a house for the sanctuary." We may not anticipate such an achievement, but we may hope to do good and even great things for our God and our race, if we devote our whole powers from the beginning to the service of Christ. We may (1) influence, during a long course, many hundreds or even thousands of souls for good; (2) help many a good and beneficent work; (3) render invaluable aid to some one useful cause or Church. 3. Honest and persevering effort to find his favour is certain to be rewarded with success. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee" (see Matt. vii. 7—11). 4. Neglected opportunity has a disastrous end. "If thou forsakes him, he will cast thee off for ever." Those who in youth are conscious of the heavenly call, but who give not heed to the voice Divine and to parental earnestness, but yield to the lower and ignobler impulses, enter on a course of folly and sin, which too often runs on to an evil end, to a life without nobility and without achievement, to a death without hope, to a future without the joy of home.—C.

Vers. 11—21.—*The way to succeed in a great work.* David's heart was set on his son's successful discharge of the high mission to which God had called him. That nothing should be left undone, so far as he himself was concerned, he gave this inspiring charge. It will suggest to us the constant condition of successful work in the kingdom of Christ.

I. **CARRYING OUT DIVINE DIRECTIONS.** David formally entrusted to his son "the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit" (ver. 12)—"all that the Lord made him understand," etc. (ver. 19); particulars of the temple furniture, which was to be made after

the mind and according to the will of him who was to be worshipped in its "most holy place." When we enter upon any great enterprise for God, whether we "arise and build," or whether we go forth and preach, or whether we organize and establish, we must seek to act according to Divine instructions. But we must not now look for *patterns*, but for *principles*. In our New Testament we have the broad principles of all holy action, of all Christian association, of all missionary enterprise. These are not far from sight, and if we honestly and earnestly seek them, we shall find them and may apply them.

II. GAINING DIVINE HELP. "The Lord God will be with thee . . . he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (ver. 20). If we proceed in a devoted and prayerful spirit, we may claim these words as applicable to ourselves. We want, and can secure: 1. The inspiration which will prompt us to faithful work. 2. The effectuating power which will make our work succeed and endure. 3. The upholding grace which will carry us through all difficulties to the end.

III. SECURING HUMAN CO-OPERATION. Solomon would receive (1) help in material from the rich stores of his father (vers. 13-18); (2) the sympathy and assistance of (a) priests and Levites, (b) skilful workmen, (c) the people generally, from the prince to the peasant (ver. 21). We must not aspire to do God's work alone; it is in every way better that we should share the privilege and the responsibility with others. It is so for our own sake, for theirs, and also for the sake of the more perfect accomplishment of the work itself. We may ask and accept aid in material and in men; from those whose special function it is to render service in sacred things ("priests and Levites"), and those who are not thus professionally obligated; from those who are "skilful" as well as "willing" (ver. 20), and from those who are willing but have skill to acquire, who will gain something of skilfulness in Christian work by taking a humble part in the work in hand; from those who are "princes" in social station and religious reputation, and from those who only belong to the "common people"; from *all* who are willing, and who will act, and thus learn to act more perfectly.

IV. MAINTAINING OUR SPIRITUAL STRENGTH. "Be strong and of good courage" (ver. 20). We want the strength which accompanies courage. Timidity is weak; fearlessness is strong. And courage is not merely a matter of strong nerves; when of the noblest order, it is the outcome of spiritual excellency; it is the fruit of faith in God. "Be strong and of good courage" means this: maintain your integrity before God; abide in Jesus Christ, that his Spirit may abide in you (John xv. 4); nourish the sustaining assurance that God is with you, to befriend and inspire you; go forth and hold on in the strength of the Strong and in the wisdom of the Wise, and you will not fail nor be discouraged. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength," etc. (Isa. xl. 31).—C.

Vers. 1-8.—*David's address to the princes of his kingdom.* In the last two chapters we have David's final words to the princes of the people and to his son Solomon. In order to pass the kingdom over to his son and to secure the succession, he summoned the princes, and solemnly, in the presence of them all, appointed Solomon his successor. These princes included the princes of the tribes enumerated in ch. xxvii. 16-22; the princes of the divisions which served the king (ch. xxvii. 1-15); the princes of thousands and hundreds; the chiefs and captains of the twelve army corps (ch. xxvii. 1); the princes of the domains and possessions of the king (ch. xxvii. 25-31). The king "stood up upon his feet" to address this assembly. Previously, on account of age and feebleness, he had sat in bed. The first part of David's address we have had previously (ch. xxii. 7-13). In the fourth verse he states how his election to be king was of God who had chosen Judah to be ruler, and that in the same way God had chosen Solomon from among his sons to be heir to the kingdom, and had committed to him the building of the temple, and concludes it by exhorting the whole assembly to continue faithful to God. Observe, the blessings of the throne and kingdom are linked to an inseparable condition (ver. 7)—that Solomon be "constant to do my commandments and my judgments." Thus temporal prosperity is inseparably connected with faithfulness to God's truth. Without this neither king nor kingdom, man nor his work, can prosper in the *true* sense of the word. In this consists real "*establishment*." What the foundation is to a house God's truth is to a king's throne, and to a man's soul and all

his ways. David goes into particulars as to how this is to be done. "Keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God." The soul must hold fast to the truth, must treasure it up within the inmost recesses of its being. This is to *keep* the truth. And it must "seek for" it—looking out for it in everything as for special treasure, setting the heart on it and gathering it up for use. The degree and earnestness with which we *seek* for it will depend upon the way in which we "keep" what we have gathered. "To him that hath shall more be given," is God's universal law in nature and in grace. Keeping is digestion, by which the appetite is stimulated to "seek." Mark, also, it is not seeking *some* truths or some favourite truths; it is "*all* the commandments." It is whole-heartedness to the *whole* truth. Pet doctrines and pet passages make us half-Christians—narrow, one-sided, harsh, and sectarian. It is the heart's preparedness for *every* message from God that makes a *whole* Christian—such a one as God would have us all to be. Mark the two results. "That ye may possess this good land." It was one thing for an Israelite to be *in* the land; it was quite another to *possess* it. It is one thing to be *in* Christ; it is quite another to *possess* so as to make *our very own* all the treasures of grace and truth that are in Christ. Some Christians, like some Israelites, are all their lives in the land without possessing a foot. Have you life in Christ? "*Lay hold* on eternal life." Are you one of God's elect? "*Make* your calling and election *sure*." Have you that Divine faith that will carry you *into* the kingdom? "*Add* to your faith," so that you may have an "*abundant* entrance into the kingdom." This is to "*possess* the land." It was Joshua's continued exhortation to Israel; it has need to be ours too. Look at the second result: "And leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever." Mark, it is only those who *possess* the good land who shall "leave it for an *inheritance*." It is your half-Christians, your narrow-souled, crooked, unwise Christians, who leave no spiritual influences *behind*. Their children get soured by the caricature of religion they see in their parents. When parental restraint is over, there are no deep spiritual principles laid in the soul in early life, and they cast off what they feel has been a yoke. *As a rule*, most parents have to blame themselves for what they mourn over in their children.—W.

Vers. 9, 10, 20, 21.—*David's charge to Solomon.* From the princes of the congregation David turns to Solomon his son. Every line is full of instruction. "Know thou the God of thy father." We may conclude Solomon already knew something, and perhaps much, of God. But this refers to a further and deeper knowledge of him, *as his father* David had experienced. It is this deeper knowledge of God that is spoken of in the New Testament. St. Paul, though he knew Christ well, still says, "That I may know him" However much we know there is always more to *be* known. It is this knowledge of him that our Lord refers to when he says (John vii. 17), "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." There is a knowledge of Christ as the Saviour from sin; there is a still further knowledge which springs from obedience in all things to his will. But David continues, "And serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind." Mark here, *service* and the *character* of it depend on the knowledge of God, and this knowledge a deepening one. This is ever the Divine order. All the graces of the Christian character act and react on each other. True knowledge ever begets service, and faithful service deepens real knowledge. But there are always two conditions attached to real knowledge and true service, *viz.* "A perfect heart and a willing mind." A perfect, or as the word means, an "*undivided*" heart, is one that is whole-hearted. Not "a heart within a heart" which God hates. Not a heart that will follow and serve the Lord when it is convenient but not when it is inconvenient. Not "*in season*" only, but also "*out of season*." Next to this is a "*willing mind*," or a mind that desires only that which will please God. A mind that will say always and in everything, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" A heart devoted and a will given up—this is what David means, and this is what God asks for. David enforces this by the statement of God's omniscience. Solomon might deceive men by having the outer life fair, while inwardly the other might be lacking, but he could not deceive God; and to him Solomon and every man will have eventually to render account. David further enforces these words by a solemn warning: "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. Take heed now." It reminds us of

Paul's solemn words to Timothy : "Take heed to thyself, and to the doctrine; continue in them: for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." The *soul* must be watched and kept, and then the *doctrine* will be sound. If we seek the Lord he will ever be found; but if we turn our backs on him, then we shall experience that spiritual darkness and misery within that will be *practically*, though to one saved in the Lord may never be *judicially*, a casting off from God. Though a true believer may never fall from *God*, he may fall from the *grace* of God; and this, though not judicial, is yet practical and experimental exclusion from God. David enjoins Solomon to "*take heed*" because he is "*chosen*." It is the *dignity* conferred that demands the *responsibility* and gives the power to rule. Is it not so with men put into high places over our land? Before men get into office, what do they not say? and how do they not act? But when they are *in office* the dignity controls and directs, and gives wisdom and judgment. So is it in the Divine life. God's grace chooses a man, makes him one of his children, puts upon him the highest dignity, and thus he possesses a motive power for holiness which nothing else can give him. David's final words to Solomon at the close of this chapter are equally solemn and suggestive. "Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed." What a string of holy exhortations! On what are they built? On God's *presence* with his people; "for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord." God's presence is the believer's joy; it is also his strength and power for work. The expression "*my God*" reminds us again of Paul: "*My God* shall supply all your need." It was the *personal* and *experimental* acquaintance with God's unchanging love and faithfulness, and that alone, which gave to David and Paul such confidence, and made them speak thus. But Solomon might have said, as many others often say, "These are precious promises and encouragements, and I am but 'young and tender,' and the work is so great; how shall I get the means, and who will help me, and how shall I know they will be ready and willing?" These and a thousand other questions rise up in the soul when God sets clear path before us, or a plain duty. How often we stand, we hesitate! We are already taking one step back. God comes in again to strengthen our faltering faith. "The priests and Levites shall be with thee, . . . and there shall be with thee every willing and skilful man, . . . the princes and *all* the people will be *wholly* at thy commandment." What a promise—"All things are yours"! So it is always. Having the Lord with us, we shall have everything else: "life and death, things present and things to come," yea, "*all* things are ours." How completely every question of the soul is met from the unchanging faithfulness and love of our God!—W.

Vers. 11-19.—*David's transfer of the patterns to Solomon.* After the solemn charge to the congregation and to Solomon, David handed over to Solomon the patterns of the temple, the enumeration beginning from outside to inside, and from thence to the courts and buildings and the vessels, and they include the minutest details of all pertaining to it. Let us mark the spiritual truths connected with this portion of God's Word, and they are many. We refer only to a few. First, as to the patterns themselves. How did David get them? They came from "the Lord" (see ver. 19). Secondly, they came by a "*writing*." Thirdly, they came "*through the Spirit*," or by Divine inspiration. Fourthly, they came through God's "*hand upon him*." These are all important points in the narrative. This great temple of old was a type of the great spiritual temple now—the kingdom of God in this world. In a secondary sense it may be taken as the believer himself: "*Ye are the temple of the living God*." Mark, then, first, everything of a Divine character comes from the Lord himself. The Lord himself is the Architect of his own house, whether it be in a man's soul or the Church of Christ. Secondly, the Divine pattern of everything spiritual comes through the "*writing*," the Word of God written. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit is the Divine Communicator of this Word. He speaks through that Word, which is the *breath* of God. And, lastly, it is through the "*hand*" of the Lord *laid upon us* that the Word becomes effectual and operative. As David handed the patterns to Solomon, so should these be the patterns handed down now, through the Word and the Spirit, and applied with power by the "*hand*" of the Lord. Solomon could not lay a single stone, nor make a single beam, nor deviate one hair's breadth from *this* pattern thus handed to him. No more may we.

There is one truth more in this narrative. It is a very precious one. It is brought before us in the fourteenth verse, and again in ch. xxix. 2—5. "Gold for things of gold, and silver for things to be made of silver, brass for things of brass, iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood." In other words, whatever golden things were needed, David had the gold provided for them; or whatever things of silver, brass, iron, or wood, David had the silver, brass, iron, and wood ready for them. It is so still in the Church of Christ as well as in the individual Christian's own history. What is our need? Do we occupy a *golden* position, or one of *iron* or *wood*? In Christ, the true David, there is the fulness to meet it. There is *all* we need for *every* position, every duty, every want, every hour of need. These needs may be great or small, lofty or lowly, corresponding to the "gold" or the "wood;" but he has exactly what is suited to meet the emergency or the need, whatever it may be: "My God shall supply all your need out of his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." How truly the teaching of the New Testament is contained in the Old!—W.

Ver. 2.—Old men's testimony. The emphatic sentence, "Then David the king stood up upon his feet," brings before us a vivid picture of the aged and infirm king making a great effort, gathering up all his strength, and once again standing up that he might render a last testimony for Jehovah. "Towards the end of David's life, he was obliged to keep to his chamber, and almost to his bed. In those later and quiet days he seems to have reviewed his long and checkered career, and his last song embodies the thoughts with which he regarded it. That last song (2 Sam. xxiii. 1—7) is full of mingled regret and hope; over the scenes of his shame he lingers for a moment sadly, but from them he turns to look up to the faithful God, whom he had ever desired to serve, and assured his heart of the permanence of that everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. In those closing words the old prophet-power came back to him, and we wish that such sentiments of humility, trust, and joy in God were the only dying utterances of his that had been preserved for us." The occasion of the effort recorded in our text was a public one: the solemn commendation of Solomon to the people, and closing public instructions for Solomon himself. The subject suggested is the *moral influence exerted by the aged godly man, who has behind him the varied experiences of a long and checkered life.* The importance of the witness of such a man's life, and of such a man's own expression of the results of his life, and of his moods of mind on coming to its close, need to be pointed out, as these may bear on the men of his own age, and as they may bear on the young generation that is growing up to take the place of those who are "passing away." As the treatment of these divisions must directly depend on the feeling and experience of the preacher, we prefer to give only the barest outline, at most suggesting lines along which the development and illustration of each point may run. As far as possible the treatment should be made cheerful and hopeful, the experience of those who see more good than evil in life being preferred.

I. THE OLD MAN'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING LIFE. He will say that he has found it *other*—but, on the whole, *better*—than he expected. Contrast the sunny anticipations of the youth with the serious reviews of the aged. A thousand anticipations have never been realized, but more than a thousand good things, of which youth could not have dreamed, have crowned the passing days with beauty and joy. Many an old man speaks brightly of the "good way wherein the Lord his God has led him."

II. THE OLD MAN'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING MAN. Looking back, he can to some extent know himself and judge his fellows. This at least the old man has learned. Man imagines and even purposes more than he can ever accomplish, and he lives, works, and dies with scaffoldings all about which were but beginnings of buildings that were never built. He has to shelter in the great hope that God will accept his purposes. And so God will, if the unwrought schemes were no mere sentimental dreams, but resolves as serious as David's, to build a temple for the Lord his God.

III. THE OLD MAN'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING GOD. He says he is the Wonder-worker who always gets his will over man's. And he is the faithful One, who keeps covenant and fulfils promise, and may be wholly trusted. He says, "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." The light of the old men's experience may well brighten and cheer the young men's

toil, and make easier the yoke of those who bear the burden and heat of the day.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*God's earthly footstool.* Using a striking poetical figure, David speaks of the ark as being “the footstool of our God;” regarding God as enthroned above it in the Shechinah-cloud. The figure is otherwise used in Scripture, in Ps. xcix. 5; cxxii. 7; Isa. lxvi. 1; Lam. ii. 1; Matt. v. 35. We must not imagine that the ark contained God, or that in any sense he dwelt in the ark. He came, in the gracious symbol of the bright cloud, above the ark, between the attendant angel-figures, only resting, as one rests his feet on a footstool, upon the lid of the ark. This lid, from another point of view, is regarded as the propitiatory, or mercy-seat. Some idea of an Eastern throne may aid in the proper realization of this figure. Van Lennep says, “Solomon’s throne was ‘made of ivory, overlaid with the best gold; it had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind. And there were stays on either side of the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays.’ It is generally supposed that this description implies a form of chair similar to ours, in which the feet rest upon a stool. There were such chairs in Egypt, and there is a picture of Rameses seated upon a throne, bearing, apparently, a close resemblance to that of Solomon, with the exception of some peculiarly Egyptian emblems. The Assyrian kings also sat upon thrones of this kind. It should, however, be remembered that this mode of sitting has ever been exceptional in the East; and though it cannot be denied that princes sometimes sat in state, after what we call the European mode, yet the analogies of the case favour the supposition that the king’s throne was more commonly in the form of a sofa, or divan, upon which he sat cross-legged.” It may be well to point out that, in this figure, we have an instance of anthropomorphic representation, or God’s way of graciously aiding our apprehension of himself and of his relations, by speaking of himself, or allowing himself to be spoken of, as if he were a man. What is suggested by such figures, rather than the form of the figure, requires our attention. Three things are suggested by the figure on which we are now dwelling.

I. **God’s footstool IMPLIES THAT GOD IS THERE.** Evidently the footstool is in use. David conceives of God as really present, and in his time the “glory-cloud” did rest between the cherubim, and the high priest might even see it on the ark-lid, which is regarded as the footstool. All the interest David felt in building the new temple depended upon his strong assurance that God, as the great King, was “making his abode with them.” He wanted the palace to be worthy of the King. Show how this presence of God is now spiritually realized. Our Lord made so much of it in his teaching, even promising that his Father and he would come, and sup with, and dwell with, the open and trusting heart, making it his footstool. Such promises should make us also anxious that the uprising temple of our character and life should be in every way worthy of the indwelling Deity. “Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?”

II. **God’s footstool IMPLIES THAT HE IS THERE IN CONDESCENSION.** This seems a prominent point in the message sent by Isaiah, “Heaven is my throne, the earth is my footstool.” We think properly of the footstool as having a lowly office, and so easily regard willingness to put a foot upon it as a condescending act. We cannot think any temple we can build is worthy to be God’s throne. He must condescend to enter our very noblest. And so of the temple of our character and life, it can be no more than his footstool. “Will God in very deed dwell with man on the earth?” It is wonderful grace that he is found willing to rest upon it his foot.

III. **God’s footstool IMPLIES THAT GOD IS NOT LIMITED TO THE PLACE WHERE HIS PRESENCE IS APPREHENDED.** His throne is not there. Only his *foot* is there. We must keep the sublime thought that he is above all things, though he fills all things. Show in what senses God may *now* be thought of as present in our churches. And earnestly impress the need of keeping up the sense of his *non-limitation* by any human places or human forms. All earth can at best be but a footstool, which he may touch if he will.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*Persuasions to obedience.* “Keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God.” ‘Speaker’s Commentary’ says, “The sense would be clearer if the

words were, ‘I charge you, keep and seek;’ and some commentators suppose that they did so run originally.” In view of the connections of this verse, the following persuasions may be illustrated and enforced. Obedience to God’s commands is man’s *natural duty*; the duty that necessarily attends upon the dependent relation in which he stands towards God. But such is man’s deterioration, through sin, that now he needs to be urged to his duty by all kinds of inspiring persuasions.

I. GOD’S GRACIOUS PROMISES ARE A PERSUASION. (Vers. 6, 7.) David urges that those promises rest upon Solomon, and the grace of them should ever lead him to say, “What manner of person ought I to be?” But David realizes that even the promises are conditional upon man’s *constancy*, so they always urge to faithfulness.

II. GOD’S PRESENCE IS A PERSUASION. Illustrate the moral influence exerted by the actual presence of the schoolmaster, the farmer, the business man, or the king. “Thou God seest me” ought to be to us, not a terror, but the inspiration to all goodness. For our moral culture no assurance is more important than this: “Certainly I will be with thee.”

III. SURROUNDING PEOPLE BECOME A PERSUASION TO EACH ONE. David has this scene enacted *publicly* that Solomon may feel how every man’s expectations and hopes rest on him, and every eye will anxiously watch his career. For others’ sakes we must be true, obedient, and faithful, for we “are made a spectacle unto men and unto angels.”

IV. THE CONDITIONS OF OUR RELATIONS WITH GOD ARE A PERSUASION. Their maintenance depends entirely on our obedience (ver. 9). They are not *sovereign* relations, but distinctly *conditional*. If we forsake God, he will cast us off for ever. So the burden of responsibility is made to lie heavily on our own shoulders. We must “take heed;” we must “seek for” and “keep” the commandments of our God, the all-comprehensive commands of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*The faithfulness of the great Heart-searcher.* “For the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts.” For this conception of God, compare 1 Sam. xvi. 7; Ps. vii. 9; cxxxix. 2; Jer. xi. 20; xvii. 10; xx. 12. The expressions of the text suggest the accuracy and intimacy of the Divine knowledge of men’s affairs. Apprehend God rightly, and his interest in us fills us with grateful surprise. Illustrate David’s feeling, “When I consider thy heavens . . . what is man that thou art mindful of him?” Solomon’s, “Will God in very deed dwell with man on the earth?” Isaiah’s, “To whom then will ye liken God? . . . He giveth power to the faint,” etc. See the Divine interest: 1. In the *spheres of natural life*; i.e. in us as *beings*. He is near as Creator, Sustainer, Provider. Birth, preservation, and death are all his. 2. In the *spheres of associated life*; i.e. as *beings in relations*. Government, family, and Church are all under his Divine inspections. 3. In the *spheres of mental life*; i.e. as *intellectual beings*. All movements of mind he presides over. 4. In the *spheres of spiritual life*; i.e. as *moral beings*. God knows and watches all unfoldings of character and religion. All spheres are accessible to him. “All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” Dwell on the subtlety of the *human heart*; its labyrinths and hiding-places and self-deceivings. How imperfect, at its best, is a man’s own knowledge of his heart! How impossible it is for one man to know the intricate workings of the heart of another man! Searching the heart is required, that its subtle evils may be discovered. But all depends on who it is that does the searching work, and with what aim and purpose the searching is done.

I. GOD CAN SEARCH THE HUMAN HEART. He *can*, for he designed it, and knows all its possibilities. He *can*, for he has never let it slip away from his observation and control, and so all its “latent mazes” he knows, and all its wilfulnesses he controls.

II. GOD SEARCHES THE HUMAN HEART WITH A DEFINITE AND GRACIOUS PURPOSE. Even its deliverance from evil and perfecting in holiness. This purpose makes good men regard the Divine searching as a most precious thing. In view of it David can pray, “Search me, O God.” He feels, “God does not know me as a mere ordinary matter of knowledge.” He is graciously and lovingly interested in me, and so he knows me helpfully, that he may adapt his grace to my various and subtle needs.” This personal interest in our highest good, which gives tone to his searching, is brought

home to our hearts by the tender interest shown in humanity, and in individuals of humanity, by the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. We feel that we never can resist *his* searching us through and through, and knowing us altogether. The close inspections of God may be: 1. *A terror to us.* Illustrate the influence of the words, "Thou God seest me," sometimes on little children. They are even used to frighten them into goodness. Compare Jacob's, "How dreadful is this place!" From Job, Isaiah, and John we learn that solemnity and awe should always attend the consciousness of God's near presence. 2. *It may be a real practical help to us,* as David expected it to be to Solomon, He who knows us so well, does not *only know*; he also gives strength. David, who trembles at God's searchings, can only say, "It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect." 3. *It may be cherished as our holiest joy.* No harm can come to us, for God's eye and hand are always on us. No good thing can fail us, for God knows all our real wants. Our Lord taught so often about the intimate knowledge and care of the heavenly Father, who keeps the sparrows, clothes the grass, watches over the seeds, paints the lilies, waves the harvests, and *knows* that we are of more value than flowers or sparrows.

Show that this truth, of God's knowledge and heart-searchings, bears upon men's tendency to *self-deception*. It is only possible to *sin on* when we have deluded ourselves into the idea that "God doth not see."—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*Personal relations with God.* "The Lord God, even my God." It is possible for us to have thoughts of God that keep him wholly external to us, and altogether unrelated to us. And it may be feared that such are the thoughts of God usually cherished by men. Though they may have a certain influence on us, the full and saving power of God cannot be known until we have appropriated him, and come into direct and personal relations with him. A man finds God a living force upon thought, heart, life, and conduct when he calls him *my God*. The work of Christ is, in great part, the bringing about of this relation, and the persuasion of the man to recognize it fully. Man lost says, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, and *hid myself*." Man redeemed, and standing right with God, says, "I flee unto thee to *hide me*." "For thou art *my God*."

I. HOW CAN GOD BE THUS PERSONALLY APPREHENDED? 1. By accepting the revelation of his fatherhood which he makes in Christ the Son, and entering into the privilege and duty which it involves. 2. By winning the trustful, thankful love of those who know they are forgiven and redeemed. 3. By maintaining those close and intimate communions with God which bring freshly to us the joy of his care.

II. WHAT IS INVOLVED IN SUCH PERSONAL RELATIONS? 1. *On God's part.* Just what God loves, and what he is sure to meet with the fullest bestowments of his grace, is man's *love and trust* expressed in the words "*my God*." 2. *On man's part.* The relation becomes the most hallowing force exerted on the whole life. The man wants to be worthy of, wants to be like, his God.

III. WHAT MAY IMPERIL SUCH RELATIONS AFTER THEY HAVE BEEN APPREHENDED? This may be treated in *detail*, or in the *general principle*. To say, "*my God*," involves maintaining the trustfulness of full and obedient submission; and, therefore, the peril lies in some returning form of *wilfulness*. This separates us at once, in feeling, from God, so that the words "*my God*" will not rise to our lips.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Vers. 1-9.—These verses continue the account of what David said to the whole congregation, respecting his son Solomon and his tender age in view of the great enterprise of building the temple; respecting the public preparations which had been already made, and the gifts of his own individual property—these latter being

alluded to, no doubt, for the sake of example. On the faith of them he grounds with tenfold effect his appeal to people and princes to join heartily in the work. The verses (6-9) also contain the statement of the hearty practical response which was made by the "chiefs of the fathers and princes of the tribes," and other varieties of givers, and of the consequent general joy.

Ver. 1.—The anxiety which David felt on

account of the youth of Solomon (repeated from ch. xxii. 5) evidently pressed heavily on him. The additional expression here is to be noticed, whom alone God hath chosen. By this plea, full of truth as it was, we may suppose that David would shelter himself from any possible blame or reflection on the part of the people, from the charge of partiality on the part of his elder children, and any unjust slight to them, and also from any *self-reproach*, in that he was devolving such a responsible task on so young and tender a man. Palace. This word (בָּיִת), by which the temple is designated here and in ver. 19, seems to be very probably a word of Persian derivation. It is found in Neh. i. 1; in Dan. viii. 2; but very frequently in Esther, where it is used not only of "Shushan the palace" (Esth. i. 2; ii. 3; iii. 15), as the royal abode, but also of the special part of the city adjoining the palace proper (Esth. i. 5; ii. 5; viii. 14; ix. 6). The word is found also in Neh. ii. 8; but there it carries the signification of the fortress of the temple. There may be some special appropriateness in its use here, in consideration of the circumstance of the fortifications and wall, which flanked the temple.

Ver. 2.—The six designations of stones in this verse are as follows:—1. Onyx stones; אַיִל (Gen. ii. 12; Exod. xxv. 7; xxviii. 9; xxxv. 9; xxxix. 6; Job xxviii. 16; Ezek. xxviii. 13). 2. Stones to be set בְּנֵי־בָּשָׂר or בְּנֵי־בָּשָׂר (Exod. xxv. 7; xxxv. 9, 27; the feminine form of the same word is found in Exod. xxviii. 17, 20; xxxix. 13). The other meanings of this word are *inauguration* to the priest's office (Lev. viii. 33), and the *sacrifice of inauguration* (Lev. vii. 37). 3. Glistering stones; פְּנִיר. Gesenius says this is the same root with φύκος, seaweed. From this seaweed an alkaline pigment was prepared, which came to be called by the same word. This Hebrew word also meant a "dye" made from *stibium*, the Latin name of *antimony* (Septuagint, στιβιοῦ: Vulgate, *stibium*), with which Hebrew women stained their eyelashes (see also 2 Kings ix. 30; Isa. liv. 11; Jer. iv. 30). Gesenius would translate here "stones of pigment," and understands them to mean possibly marble for covering, as though with a solid paint, the walls. 4. Stones of divers colours; מְבָשָׂר. This word, which means "variegated," is only in this passage applied to stones. It is applied once to the feathers of the eagle (Ezek. xvii. 3); but almost always to needlework or garments, often being translated in the Authorized Version as "broadered" (Judg. v. 30; Ps. xlvi. 15; Exek. xvi. 10, 13, 18; xxvi. 16; xxvii. 7, 16, 24). 5. All manner of precious stones. The feminine form, קְרָבָה.

The simplest idea of the word is "heavy," thence precious, dear, rare (2 Sam. xii. 30; 1 Kings v. 31; vii. 9; x. 2; ch. xx. 2; 2 Chron. iii. 6; ix. 1; Job xxviii. 16; xxxi. 26; Prov. i. 13; iii. 15; Isa. xxviii. 16; Ezek. xxviii. 13; Dan. xi. 38). 6. Marble stones; וְשָׁבֵן, the elementary idea of which is whiteness. This word is found only here; Septuagint and Vulgate, "Parian marble." A word akin (וְשָׁבֵן), meaning also "white marble" is found in Esth. i. 6; Cant. v. 16. The further treatment of these stones will be found on 2 Chron. iii. 6.

Ver. 3.—Translate, And, moreover, because of my delight in the house of my God, what I have as mine own treasure of gold and of silver I have given to the house of my God, over and above all I have prepared for the holy house. The word מְבָשָׂר, on the seven other occasions of its use (Exod. xix. 5; Deut. vii. 6; xiv. 2; xxvi. 18; Ps. cxxxv. 4; Eccles. ii. 8; Mal. iii. 17), is found in the Authorized Version as "peculiar treasure" or "special treasure" and once "jewels," but in every instance it is evident that the specialness denoted is at one with the idea of the affection that is borne by a person to his own possession and property.

Ver. 4.—Respecting the uncertainty of the amounts here denoted, even if the numbers of the present text be accepted as correct, see note on ch. xxii. 14. Bertheau and Keil make three thousand talents of gold the equivalent of thirteen millions and a half of our money, and seven thousand talents of silver the equivalent of two and a half millions of our money—or, if the royal shekel instead of the sacred be supposed to be the standard, they make them the half of those two amounts respectively. Others calculate the value of the gold to reach thirty millions, and of the silver three millions of our money (see Conder's 'Bible Handbook,' 2nd edit., pp. 63—65, 81). The situation of Ophir is still considered undetermined. The other occasions on which it is mentioned are as follows:—Gen. x. 29 (ch. i. 23); 1 Kings ix. 28; x. 11; xxii. 49; 2 Chron. viii. 18; ix. 10; Job xxii. 24; xxviii. 16; Ps. xlvi. 10; Isa. xiii. 12. It must be understood also that it is to it that allusion is made in 1 Kings x. 22, where we read that silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks, beside the gold, were imported into Judæa from it. The "almug" tree is also said to have been brought in the same ships which brought the gold of Ophir. The Septuagint always translates by some form of the word Σουφίς (except in Gen. x. 29), which word comes very near the Coptic name for India. There is also a place in India, mentioned by Ptolemy, Ammianus, and Abulfeda, the site of the present *emporium* of Goa, called

Souwdpa, and which would explain both the Hebrew and the Septuagint words. An Indian site for Ophir would also well suit the mention of the ivory and the particular wood which the ships brought. On the other hand, the first occasion of this name Ophir finds it placed among the tribes of *Joktan*'s descendants, who occupied South Arabia. It is there (Gen. x. 29; ch. i. 23) placed between Sheba and Havilah, both abounding in gold. There are other considerations that favour Arabia. Many other places have been suggested, and some of them supported by respectable authorities, such as Eastern Africa, South America and Peru, Phrygia, etc. If there be a real question about it, to the prejudice of Arabia, it would be to India we must look. That some of the commodities brought belonged more especially to India, though even in that case the majority belonged undoubtedly to Arabia, is very true. This circumstance throws great probability into the suggestion that whether Ophir were in Arabia or India, it was a great *emporium*, and not simply an exporter of its own particular produce (see Gesenius, 'Lexicon,' *sub voce*; Smith's 'Bible Dictionary'). The last sentence of this verse certainly says that the destined use of the refined silver, as well as of the gold of Ophir, was to overlay the walls of the houses. We know that gold was used for this purpose (2 Chron. iii. 5-10). But we do not read of the silver being used for *over-laying* purposes. We also read that none of the drinking-vessels of Solomon were of *silver*, as "it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon" (1 Kings x. 21; 2 Chron. ix. 20). It is possible, the order of the sentences notwithstanding, that the mention of the *refined silver* is only to prepare the way for the contents of ver. 5, and that it must not be applied to the last sentence of our present verse.

Ver. 5.—The Authorized Version, to consecrate his service, might in this instance seem to be not merely an inaccurate but an incorrect translation. For David's evident meaning was, after rehearsing his own example, to base on it the appeal, Who is . . . willing to bring an ungrudging handful this day to the Lord? and 2 Chron. xiii. 9 might perhaps be cited as a confirmatory instance. But on the other hand, the idiom was evidently, by the witness of many passages, a general one, and the meaning of it is not incorrectly conveyed in the Authorized Version, where service means in every case active and practical help (Exod. xxviii. 41; xxix. 9; xxxii. 29; Numb. iii. 3, etc.). The question now is not one of consecrating heart and affection, but rather of giving the practical proof of them.

Ver. 6.—The response was hearty; it

comprised voluntary gifts from the most of those mentioned in ch. xxviii. 1; and described in ch. xxvii. 16-31. For the rulers of the king's work, see ch. xxvii. 26; xxviii. 1. As the more general term "work" is employed, we are not bound to confine the expression to include only those who managed "the substance and cattle" of ch. xxviii. 1.

Ver. 7.—The Authorized Version translation *drams* occurs also twice in Ezra and twice in Nehemiah. There is no doubt that the coin referred to is the Persian *dari*, with which the Jews became familiar during the time of their exile. The Hebrew word appears in three different forms. 1. As *לְלִכְדָּן*; here and Ezra viii. 27. 2. As *לְלִכְדָּן*; Ezra ii. 69; Neh. vii. 70-72. 3. As *לְכִילָּן*; in rabbinical writings, but not in Scripture. Respecting the possible derivations of the words in the first and second forms, see Gesenius's 'Lexicon,' *sub voce*, and Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible' (2nd edit., p. 181). The obverse of the coin shows the image of a king, with bow and spear. The value of the coin is variously computed at thirteen shillings and sixpence or twenty-two shillings and sixpence. Keil suggests that the mention of *daries* as well as talents in this verse may point to some of the gold being contributed in the shape of *coin* instead of *talents-weight*. This does not seem likely, however, because, of course, the *dari* itself was not in use in Jerusalem in David's time, and any gold coin that was then in use might have received mention on its own account, even if translated also into the *dari*. The Septuagint translates in this verse merely by the word *χρυσούς*, the Vulgate by *solidos*. Under any circumstances, the coin is to be distinguished from the *δραχμή*. Specimens of the *dari*, both in gold and silver, exist in the Paris and Vienna Museums. The Hebrew word for the ten thousand preceding the so-called *drams* of this verse is the word for "myriad" (כָּנָעַן, a shortened form of כָּנָעָן), found also in Ezra ii. 64; Neh. vii. 66; Dan. xi. 12; Jonah iv. 11.

Ver. 8.—For *Jehiel*, see ch. xxiii. 7, 8; xxvi. 20-22; and for the stones contributed among the other gifts, see Exod. xxxv. 9, 27. Of the same chapter in Exodus, especially in its vers. 4-9 and 20-29, the whole of our present passage so vividly reminds us that the difficulty might be to doubt that it was present as a model to the mind of David himself.

Ver. 10-20.—The majesty and comprehensiveness of this passage—a national liturgy of itself—are in direct proportion to the brevity of it. It includes adoration, acknowledgment of the inherent nature of human dependence, self-humiliation, and

confession, dedication of all the offerings, and prayer both for the whole people in general, and for Solomon in particular, in view of his future position and responsibilities. Its utter repudiation of all idea of meritoriousness is very striking. The traces are visible of what may be called snatches of memory on the part of David from various religious odes of his own authorship, as well as from those of others still on record, as, for instance, especially in vers. 14—17, compared with passages in Ps. xxiv.; 1; lxxxix.; xxxix.; xc.; cii.; cxliv.; vii.; xvii.; and cxxxix. But the unity of this service is abundantly conspicuous, and every sentence seems weighed and measured for the occasion. The scene, reaching its climax in what is recorded in ver. 20, must have been one of the utmost religious grandeur and impressiveness. It is true that the very last clause, which couples the reverence done on the part of the assembled multitude to the king, with that done to Jehovah himself, strikes us as an unfortunate conjunction. It does not, indeed, need upon its merits any vindication, considering the tenor of all which has preceded; but it may be felt an extenuation of the form in which the expression occurs, if we suppose (as we justly may) that the people viewed their act in the light of part of their religious service at that particular time. In 1 Kings i. 31 the same words express the reverence paid to David, though in numerous other passages they mark that offered to God (Exod. iv. 31; 2 Chron. xxix. 30; Neh. viii. 6).

Ver. 15.—Of the seven other clear occasions of occurrence of the word here translated abiding (תְּבָדֵד), it bears three times the meaning of "a gathering together" as of waters (Gen. i. 10; Exod. vii. 19; Lev. xi. 36). The other four times it is translated in the Authorized Version "hope," either in the abstract (Ezra x. 2), or in the personal object of it (Jer. xiv. 8; xvii. 13; 1.7). Probably the word "abiding," as drawn from this latter aspect of the word, expresses with sufficient accuracy the intended meaning here.

Ver. 17.—It may very possibly be that the stress with which David here says, I know, had its special cause. The thought of God as one who "tried" the heart is one often brought out in David's psalms, but a strong conviction of it may have been wrought in David's mind by Samuel's rehearsal of the language God used to him at the very time of the election of David from among all the other of Jesse's sons (1 Sam. xvi. 7).

Ver. 18.—In the imagination of the thoughts of the heart. We have here again a reminiscence of the early language of

Genesis (Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21). See also our book, ch. xxviii. 9; Deut. xxxi. 21). This same word for "imagination" (רֵזֶח) is found in the Authorized Version in Isa. xxvi. 3, "Whose *mind* is stayed," etc.; and in Ps. ciii. 14; Isa. xxix. 16; Hab. ii. 18; in the last three passages translated as "frame," "framed," and "work."

Ver. 19.—For the palace, see ver. 1.

Vers. 21—25.—These verses record "the sacrifices and drink offerings" by which all the service of this day was ratified as it were on the following day; also the solemn "anointing of Solomon to the Lord as chief governor, and of Zadok as priest," with the visible enthronement of Solomon, and the submission to him "of all Israel, of all the princes and mighty men, and also of all the sons of David" (1 Kings i. 49—58).

Ver. 21.—In this verse the distinction is to be noticed between the sacrifices of thank offerings (תְּהִלָּה); those of burnt offerings (זָבֵחַ); and their drink offerings, *i.e.* the drink offerings that went with them (צְבָדָה). For the first of these the more specific Hebrew word is תְּהִלָּה (Lev. vii. 20; ix. 4) or זָבֵחַ (Lev. iii. 1; vii. 11, 13, 15; Numb. vii. 17). The breast and right shoulder were the priest's share. All the rest belonged to the person who sacrificed, and his friends, and must be eaten the same or the next day (Lev. vii. 11—18, 29—31). Other particulars may be found in Smith's "Bible Dictionary," iii. 1470, 1471. The last clause of our verse tells us how ample was the feast provided by these sacrifices on this occasion, being in abundance for all Israel. The *burnt offering* is first mentioned in Gen. viii. 20; it is the only sacrifice that the Book of Genesis (see xv. 9, etc.; xxii. 2, etc.) knows. The offering (תְּרִמָּה) of Gen. iv. 4 is somewhat obscure, but does not appear to have been a sacrifice of blood. This sacrifice was one which was wholly consumed on the altar of fire, and supposed to ascend to heaven. The chief kinds of burnt offerings were (1) the daily (Exod. xxix. 38—42; Numb. xxviii. 3—8); (2) the sabbath (Numb. xxviii. 8—10); (3) that at the new moon, the Day of Atonement, the three great festivals and the Feast of Trumpets (Numb. xxviii. 11—xxix. 39). Beside these, there were the several kinds of *free will* and *private* burnt offerings. The first, seventh, and eighth chapters of Leviticus contain full accounts of the ceremonial. The *drink offering* is spoken of as early as Gen. xxxv. 14; but those to which reference is here made as appertaining to the before-mentioned sacrifices are more explicitly spoken of in such passages as Exod. xxix. 40; Lev. xxii. 13; Numb. vi. 17; xv. 5—24; xxviii. 10—14.

Ver. 22.—Evident stress is laid upon the eating and drinking of that day as before the Lord, and upon the anointing of Solomon to the Lord. This latter expression is more forcible than the former. The second time of making Solomon king is explained by 1 Kings i. 32—40; ch. xxiii. 1. The statement that Zadok was anointed to be priest must probably be understood to describe, either the re-anointing of him (just as “they made Solomon king the second time”) on an occasion which particularly invited it; or an anointing which had not been before fully performed. This latter is, perhaps, an unlikely supposition; but at the same time, the fact of any previous ceremony of the kind does not happen to be narrated. Zadok had been joint priest with Abiathar of the line of Ithamar (ch. xv. 11; 2 Sam. 24, 29; xix. 11); but now he was anointed under circumstances of special publicity, and at a crisis of special interest, to supersede Abiathar, who had sided with Adonijah, and who was early to be removed altogether from the sacred office (1 Kings i. 7, 8, 32, 38, 44, 45; ii. 26, 27).

Ver. 23.—For the happy expression, the throne of the Lord, see ch. xxviii. 5. And for evidence that Solomon did really exercise royal authority before David’s death, see 1 Kings i. 32, 45—48; ii. 1.

Ver. 25.—Any king before him in Israel. There were, of course, only two kings “before” Solomon in Israel. The promise of God to Solomon, however, when he was “pleased” with the speech of the prayer which he offered a very short time subsequently, was much larger, and suggests itself to us as what may really have been present to the mind of the historian when he used the less comprehensive words above (2 Chron. i. 12; 1 Kings iv. 12, 13).

Vers. 26—30.—These verses contain last words respecting David’s reign, its extent and its length; respecting his death and age, and the succession of Solomon; and respecting the sources of the history of himself, his reign, his people, and other countries.

Ver. 26.—The words of this verse, not indeed hard to follow here, but marking the close instead of the commencement or career of David’s reign over all Israel, are paralleled by the earlier passage, ch. xviii. 14; 2 Sam. viii. 15.

Ver. 27.—In the same way the contents of this verse are paralleled by ch. iii. 4; 2 Sam. v. 5; 1 Kings ii. 11; this last passage giving only seven years instead of the seven years and six months for the reign in Hebron.

Ver. 28.—We learn from 2 Sam. v. 4, 5, that David was thirty years old when he began to reign in Hebron. He must, there-

fore, have died in his seventy-first year. That this is called here a good old age shows that the length of human life had now greatly subsided. In comparison of all his successors on the thrones of Judah and of Israel, his age was clearly a “good old age.”

Ver. 29.—The Hebrew word here translated acts is identical with the words translated three times afterwards in this verse book. A uniform rendering for all might be found in the general word “history” or “acts.” The question as to the probable nature of these works, and whether identical with our Books of Samuel, has been treated of in the Introduction. The Hebrew word for “seer,” applied in this verse to Samuel, is *נָבָן*. And that applied to Gad, though the Authorized Version has the same translation, “seer,” is *נָבָן*. There can be no doubt that the word applied to Samuel would, under any circumstances, stand as the higher of the two names, were there any comparison intended between them. This is confirmed by the fact that it is used only of him (1 Sam. ix. 9, 11, 18, 19; 2 Sam. xv. 27; ch. ix. 22; xxvi. 28; xxix. 29) and of Hanani (2 Chron. xvi. 7, 10), whereas the word applied to Gad in this verse is the generic name for seers, and is used several times in the Books of Chronicles of other persons than Gad. At the same time, the parenthesis in 1 Sam. ix. 9, to the effect that the word here used of Samuel as *seer* (*נָבָן*) was superseded in later times (as, for instance, at the time of the writing of the Books of Samuel) by the word *prophet* (*נָבִיא*), compared with Isa. xxx. 10, points in a somewhat different direction. In the first place, it would indicate that our Authorized Version in Isa. xxx. 10 should rather stand, “Which say to the prophets, Prophesy not, and to the seers,” etc. While for our present passage it would indicate that no insidious comparison is possible between Samuel and Gad as seers, but rather that Samuel retains the old honoured name by which he had been wont to be called, and that to *Nathan* is with equal naturalness attached the more modern name—the functions represented being essentially the same, or at least analogous.

Ver. 30.—The phrase in this verse, The times that went over him, is noticeable as an *hapax legomenon*. There are, however, not a few phrases more or less nearly approaching it in sense, and all hinging on the word *times* (ch. xii. 32; Esth. i. 13; Job xxiv. i.; Ps. xxxi. 15; Dan. vii. 25). The last sentence of this chapter is illustrated, and most suggestively, by 2 Chron. xii. 8; xvii. 10, 11, 22—30; Ezra ix. 7.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—God's choosing, and man's right attitude in the presence of it. It is very evident that great anxiety pressed upon the mind of David whenever he thought of the youthfulness of Solomon side by side with the magnitude of the enterprise in store for him. Nervousness, however, does not paralyze David, but does make him thoughtful, provident, and careful (as far as he can see the way) to disarm, at all events, the more apparent and threatening dangers. The remoter, human calculation must fail to gauge, and must leave with humble trust and humbler confession of its own limited powers. Notice in this connection—

I. THE SIGNIFICANT ASSERTION ON THE PART OF DAVID OF GOD'S ACT OF CHOICE. Addressing all the congregation of the people, and consciously facing all the perils of the situation—not blinding himself to them nor trying to cloke them from others—David says, “Solomon my son, . . . is yet young and tender, and the work is great;” but in the middle he finds opportunity to insert this suggestive qualification, “Whom alone God hath chosen.” 1. **God's choice, God's call**, where they can be truly asserted, are the unchallengeable vindication of whatsoever may seem unusual, unreasonable, even unjust. He has legitimate power over all that he has made. He gives not account to any one of his doings. The things most unexpected are what he frequently brings to pass. This is David's tacit answer to all his elder children, if they are murmuring in their hearts; this his pronounced vindication of himself before “all the congregation of the people,” if they should censure him, that in one and the same breath he makes Solomon his chief heir and successor and responsible for so great a work, and yet betrays an unfeigned anxiety as to his fitness and competency for the position. It suffices to clear him of the suspicion of an unpaternal partiality, on the one hand, in his family, and in his nation on the other hand, of a weak and unpatriotic favouritism. 2. **God's choice**—his *call*, the persuasion of his *decree*—is the one source of confidence to the innermost heart of the man, who must otherwise often be the tortured victim of anxiety, of doubt, of mystery. In human life there may often be not one word of worldly wisdom to be urged for a course for which the individual heart nevertheless may have not so truly its own reasons as God's own reasons. The thing that conspicuously *fails* to justify itself before the eye of the whole world may find its sovereign *raison d'être* in what was the dictate of an unmistakable inspiration. The grain of seed was of heavenly sowing. The spot where it fell was lighted by the light of God's eye. The germinating and all the subsequent stages of growth to the very ripening of it were all watched and favoured by Divine tending. The result is secure. And that result stands good and the fruits of it have spread far and wide, when all the criticism with which it was assailed has perished ignominiously. The strength of the martyr has, of course, been rooted in this, and the paradox has been times without number witnessed of the gentlest, meekest, and most self-surrendering standing the strongest, speaking the most dogmatically, and refusing to surrender a jot of what they held. So with healthiest communication God visits the very heart of mankind, and in reaching *one* so deeply, so surely, influences millions, and colours the complexion of centuries succeeding. Whatever natural apprehension remained now on the mind of David, it was he who most felt of what a load of responsibility he was relieved when he could say of Solomon, “Whom alone God hath chosen.” 3. The conviction of God's choice, call, or decree being in question inspires, not force, confidence, comfort only, but also reverence, unquestioning submission, implicit obedience. This proved already by the conduct of David and his own careful exhortation of Solomon and, so to say, education of him for his future place, is also abundantly evidenced in the *tone* of his present address to the people in alluding to the subject. Perhaps no aspect of the character of God given us by revelation has met with more irreverent, sceptical, and quibbling treatment than this from that part of the world “that knoweth not God.” Yet, in strictest harmony as it is with all the original facts of the spontaneity of One who must needs be a sovereign Creator if he be any at all, the *deepest* things involved in the *choice* and the *call* and the *decree* of God must be the deepest, coolest springs of reverence, resignation, and loving obedience to the other part of the world. Then we sing—

“ When my dim reason would demand
 Why that or this thou dost ordain,
 By some vast deep I seem to stand,
 Whose secrets I must ask in vain.

“ When doubts disturb my troubled breast,
 And all is dark as night to me,
 Here as on solid rock I rest—
 That so it seemeth good to thee.

“ Be this my joy, that evermore
 Thou rulest all things at thy will.
 Thy sovereign wisdom I adore—
 And calmly, sweetly trust thee still.”

II. THE FIRM ASSERTION BEFORE THE NATION OF WHAT IT IS THAT GIFTS ANY WORK OF MAN WITH TRUE DIGNITY, WITH GENUINE IMPORTANCE. “The palace is . . . for the Lord God.” This is to put things in their right places—God, heaven, immortality, the unperishing first of all. 1. A sound religious principle is bravely upheld before all. There is none of the bated breath and the semi-suppression offered to it which are so often offered to the principles of revealed religion. 2. A most neglected aspect of religious practice is here brought into prominence. Truths and principles of religion, acknowledged by the lip, are too often ignored in practice. The prayers we say, the praise we sing, the adoration we ejaculate, are not unfrequently dishonoured to the degree of being rendered worthless through the next deed we do or fail to do. It is not the tender, the immature, the inexperienced, the incompetent who, untrusted in statesmanship, untrusted in the professions of human life, are to be indifferently or recklessly trusted with the affairs of “the kingdom.” And even when God calls such, man, both prince and people, the skilled and the experienced, are only to hear more practically the call to rally round the Lord’s choice. 3. The non-performance of human work for God is sufficiently guarded from confusion with the non-meritoriousness of human work for God. The distinction, abundantly plain to all who have eyes to see, is often treated as though it were among the inscrutable mysteries. To such an extent is this pretence carried that the neglect of a high and conscientious performance of works for God is assumed to be warranted by the mere fact that no merit lives in them in their aspects Godward. Yet the less of meritoriousness the more peremptory may be the demand that that humble quatum of duty be punctiliously and as heartily performed. How healthy, how natural to an unsophisticated conscience and judgment, sounds the tone of David’s language now, “The work is great: for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God!” Will anything in modern days pass muster to be given to God, to the Church of Christ, to his work? Yet this is the spirit of much language we hear, of much more conduct we witness. In the gifts of the hand, in the gifts of the mind, and in the gifts of the heart, the weak and poor, the blind and blemished and lame, are too frequently presented to the temple of the Lord, to the Church of Christ, to the highest office of the ministry of Christ’s gospel. The work is *not* held great, just because it *is* of an ecclesiastical cast. It would have enlisted tenfold to an hundred-fold interest or enthusiasm if it had been of a civic, of a patriotic, or of a domestic sort. So David thought not, did not, whether now in the last hours of mortal life or in the days when youth glowed, strength abounded, and the heart loved to sing of “Jerusalem as its chief joy” and God as its “Strength and Portion for evermore.”

Vers. 2—9.—A pattern for religious devotion. There is much religious feeling that fails of fruitfulness. It resembles often the fragrant blossom of the early spring on the fruit tree, and which promises well even beyond the time of the setting, but still fails most disappointingly of bringing fruit to perfection. These failures are generally easily traceable in each successive instance to their proper cause. But when so traced the mischief is done, the forfeiture is suffered, and the wisdom comes all too late. The real composition of genuine religious devotion, the elements necessary to practical religious devotion, are well illustrated in this series of verses. They have much in common with the characteristic marks of Christian compassion. Either of these principles is very often found to pine, just as though for want of stamina. To prevent this disappoint-

ment and waste would be to add an incalculable amount to the growth of goodness and to the benefit of the world. And the pattern good for religious devotion exhibited to us here shows the following characteristics:—

I. **IT SEEKS AN INDIVIDUAL OBJECT.** The house to be builded for the Lord, the temple, is now *the* thought of David's heart and *the* object of what remains to him of earthly life. And of this he might truly say in the language used long after by St. Paul, “*This one thing I do.*” This was confessedly in David's time, and from the point of view of his nation, a very great enterprise; yet it was *one* thing to think of and *another* to do. How much time and feeling and earnestness are frittered away, counting for nothing except mournful moral reflection in the retrospect, with those who wait to do anything until they might, as they fondly imagine, do all, or, if not all, might embrace a very large compass in their benevolent aspiration! Universal observation rebukes the large foible. The useful men have been those who have steadily and with determination pursued one thing at the time. This is the first healthy sign of religious devotion, when with heart and hand it weds itself to one object of zeal and pursuit. Concentration of purpose, of affection, of energy, is as much the secret of great usefulness directed to the very highest ends as it is of that poor travesty of it, earthly *success*, so often mistaken and mishonoured as the equivalent of usefulness.

II. **IT STUDIES ITS OBJECT WITH DISCRIMINATING, PAINSTAKING CARE.** We are often tempted to buy off individual responsibility by doing just what others do, and giving just what others give, and suffering ourselves to be borne on the general stream of opinion, or on the old stream of opinion, as though no individual judgment, or conscience, or conviction were possible to us. This, however, is the very opposite of what we do when we feel our own individual interest to be concerned. If we are to give reality and honesty to God's work and grace and finish to our work for man, for Christ's sake, it must be by this latter “rule” that we are guided. And very lovingly and heartily must we resign ourselves to its methods. How carefully David had surveyed in thought the whole and every part of the one work to which he had “set his affection”! The gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, and wood, and onyx stones, and glistening stones, and stones of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance,—all the variety of them had been imagined and provided for, or all the weight and purity of the metal had been measured and contracted for. Thought and discrimination and pains had been spared in nothing of all these. The circumspection and minuteness of care and fond anxiety which men know so well to spend on themselves and their own transient, temporal interests, David now spends on the work of God. Such exercise of religious devotion throws thrilling interest and unwonted animation into any holy work, and invokes with *unerring* importunity Heaven's abounding blessing.

III. **IT PURSUES ITS ANXIOUS PREPARATIONS, AND, IF NECESSARY, PURSUES THEM FOR A LONG TIME IN SILENCE, OR IN COMPARATIVE SILENCE.** Nothing less needs ostentation, nothing less warrants display, than our work for God. When any man is deeply conscious that it is God's work that he has in hand, then he feels it is God's glory that he has at heart, and this dispenses with all craving for notice and applause. This latter is poor food for any one whomsoever who has already known and tasted the other. Now, the case of David at the present time was such that what he was doing must needs have been known. It could not have been hidden in his own heart or anywhere else. Yet it is plain that he had for some time been patiently, and with no needless publicity, making his zealous preparations. He was certainly far from finding himself in the position of Noah when planning and building the ark—the object of ridicule, hindrance, and jeering of the people. No, nor, on the other hand, is he continually sounding the trumpet and calling attention to himself and his doings. But now the ripe moment had come when the loving and patient preparations of one must be handed over, not exactly to another, but into the trust of the representatives of a nation as well. It was a moment when it was needful that the deeds and the purposes of David should no longer simply escape into the knowledge of others, but be formally and solemnly announced to all a listening people. The work of Christ in the world loves silence, patience, hideness long time. Neither he nor his kingdom nor his chiefest servants “come with observation,” nor live “with observation;” yet the longer the delay and the humbler the obscurity, the more effective and heart-stirring will the final “mani-

festation" be. The self-denial, the deep interest, the long labour of the humblest faithful servant will be proclaimed before a kingdom and in a kingdom which shall have gathered all others into itself, and by the King of kings himself.

IV. IT GIVES OF ITS OWN SUBSTANCE. The temptation is great with some leaders of the people merely *to* lead, to direct, to administer. And when this is the case the deficiency will very generally express itself *somewhere* before long. Enthusiasm will be wanting in the followers. In their minds an irresistible sense of unreality will get awakened. With a good conscience, indeed, David can appeal to the liberality of others by a simple reference to his own example. "Of his own proper good," *i.e.* "private substance," he had contributed largely. The influence of such an announcement is at least twofold. 1. It attests the honesty of the leader. 2. It speaks more strongly than any words could urge the powerful, sometimes omnipotent, stimulus of example.

V. IT OWNS TO AN INTRINSIC ZEAL IN APPEALING TO OTHERS. One can almost imagine David saying to himself, after all that he has thought, prepared, done, still this further, "Woe is to me if I do not *testify* with my dying lips, and testify in this way—by appealing earnestly to others!" True enough, there is preaching that is of the weakest. Its feeble tones, its timid essaying of its vocabulary, its apologetic style, bespeak its insincerity, at all events its untrustworthiness. It has *no* ring about it. But the devotion that is real is *confident in itself*. If it sometimes seem to overstep the threshold of moderation, it is ashamed to stay this side of it. The very best zeal for inflaming others is that which *consumes self*. So the "greater Son of David" came to a time when the truest utterance of his pure life was this, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." The highest Christian devotion has never failed to find this voice: "Who is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" Who is willing to consecrate himself this day unto the Lord? Who is willing "*to fill his hand*," and bring such handful to the Lord? These are the appeals that are likely to be heard by all classes of men, the rich and the poor, people and princes. And they sound the keynote; they constitute themselves just the watchword; joy is awakened unfeigned in every heart; praise leaps to the lips of all. Then men "offer willingly and with perfect heart." The scene—an inspiration itself—would not have had its place on the page of God's Word, but for the religious devotion, real, practical, of which David unconsciously offers us an illustrious example, model lesson.

Vers. 10-20.—*The last thanksgiving of the royal life in its varied elements.* Perhaps David had been in some doubt as to how his address would be received. If received favourably, he may have been in doubt as to the practical response to it for which his heart longed. And even if of this also he felt he might make quite sure, yet there was the hour of his own last great effort now past. That effort had been made with whatever demand on body and mind went along with it, and the suspense is over. Great hearts alone can know great joys. There are few greater joys than are found in relief from the strain of anxiety, from the burden of long preparation, and the conscious weight of responsibility. But when the natural welling up of joy from such causes coincides with an unparalleled success, and this in matter of religious moment, then every possible element seems present. And a good heart gives itself up to a transport, which can find no sympathetic expression but at the foot of the throne of thrones itself. And hither does David now betake himself; but not alone—hither he leads also a nation. These verses contain more than thanksgiving. They may, however, be appropriately enough called the service of thanksgiving. And the service appropriates in impartial measures the characteristics of majesty and comprehensiveness. Here are unqualified thanksgiving, profound adoration, the confession of creature dependence, and the humiliation befitting it; here are meditation and reminiscence, and all symptom of moral sympathies in strongest activity; here is petition, fervent petition, for the present and for the long future of the palace, the people, and the son himself of David. The opening sentence of this service gives its key-note and bespeaks its main design. In its rich variety, however, as a whole, let us notice—

I. ITS STATELY ASPIRATION. "Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever." What words *can* do they are intended here to do. They sometimes do the more for their fewness, and they are few here. This word "blessed," when applied

to the Divine Personage, is a picked, choice, word of the spiritual vocabulary that is open to a creature approaching the Creator. It is the word of highest and most refined effort. Human exclamation has done its best, has touched its highest note, when, having passed through thanks, gratitude, praise, glorifying, magnifying, and, if there be any other, it soars on *this* note, and rests and poises itself as it were on *this* note: "Blessed be thou, Lord God." The soul that has striven to give his due to the Lord God, yet striven too anxiously in vain, flings itself on that one remaining word, and, lost in admiration, it breathes the simplicity and sincerity of an impassioned genuine fervour into it, and must be content. This word "blessed," when applied to the Divine Being, is confessedly a familiar one to our ear, to our lip; but, if estimated by the freight it contained now, has contained times without number, and may this day contain, it is one owning to priceless sacredness and beauty. And it is this, not so much for what it speaks, but for the fact that when first speech most fails, it comes the only volunteer to bear Heavenward what we mean. Note, again, the telling accompaniments of this ascription in the time-view of it. 1. It stretches backward to the birth of the favoured and now enrapt people, "Lord God of Israel our Father." 2. It stretches forward, far, far further, "For ever and ever."

II. ITS ADORING ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S SOVEREIGN, UNIVERSAL PROPRIETORSHIP. To give to God his own even in language is a thing often forgotten. Thought is careless to do it. Faith is sleepy to do it. Aspiration's effort is weak on wing to try it. Men grovel in the use of even the infinitesimally small, and forsake the mighty inspiration of the mere *attempt* at a survey of all. But what source of comfort and of undelusive strength it should be for the creature to rehearse to himself the infinite fulness, the glorious riches of his Maker, Father, God! That the contrast should seem appalling, great even to overwhelming, is *not* the just and legitimate result of the meditation and acknowledgment. To be timid, anxious, uncertain, is the portion for those who know not on what they have to depend, or who do know that he on whom they depend has himself but impoverished means! But the weakest creature is strong, comforted, blessed, whose eye of faith surveys this wealth of possession, these boundless surroundings of the supreme Being. Yes; we leave unsaid, unthought, the exalting sovereign truth now (as fully as it is simply) recited by David and his people. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: *all* that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; ... and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." We may distinguish in the beautiful riches of this descriptive and this majestically picturesque sketch of the infinite Being: 1. The intrinsic attributes given to him. 2. The absolute universal possession perceived in him. 3. His *position* and consequent active *rule*. 4. His bestowments of such things as "riches and honour." 5. His bestowments of such other more intrinsic vital gifts, as "to make great" and "to give strength." There are gifts for the *hand*, but there are other gifts for the very springs of one's *own life*. These assimilate, as it were, with our spontaneous force, and the human then shows more or less Divine. God owns all; and great is the all which he owns. *And he gives.* He is not more adorable for the all that he has than he is for the all that he gives. And it is very interesting to observe, as by the help of this passage, how difficult is it to divorce the possessing of God from his bestowing—all creation itself, the overflowing of his fulness.

III. ITS SIMPLEST PRONOUNCED THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE. When the adoring ecstasy is passed, then reason and justice, though on the humblest scale, are to resume their place, and the creature-debt of thanks and praise is to be paid, sacredly, simply paid, with the lip. To this David leads his people with himself: "Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious Name."

IV. ITS UNQUALIFIED DISCLAIMER OF ALL MERIT ON THE PART OF KING AND PEOPLE. To not a rag of self-righteousness will David permit the whole gathering of his nation to lay claim. Have they given? they have given what was first given to themselves. Have they given heartily? they have given to the Giver himself. There has been no merit in their doings. No; nor can there be any meritoriousness about themselves. For what are they? There is not the substance in them of which merit could be made, nor the root to them of which it could grow, nor the continuance

belonging to them by which it might ripen. Their life, their home, *themselves*, are all dependent just on mercy, and their hopes lie in infinite loving-kindness. And it was the same with their fathers before them. To such material and such a history merit cannot find where to attach.

V. ITS UNFALTERING APPEAL TO CONSCIOUS INTEGRITY. David disclaims all merit, but he claims *confidently* before the all-seeing, the heart-searching One, his own "uprightness," *i.e.* pure motive and sincere zeal. Few things have owned to more various quality under one face than the profession of zeal for the glory of God. Religious zeal is, no doubt, religious zeal, but nine-tenths of what is named religious zeal is a far different thing. It is the hybrid ecclesiastical zeal. And ecclesiastical zeal is not merely a thing very inferior always, but often absolutely antagonistic to the genuine thing, religious zeal. That David protests his own zeal and heartfelt pleasure in the great work of the temple-building may seem unnecessary, and his object in doing so may seem somewhat obscure. Yet probably all found here is true to nature. First, he could not be wrong in formally dedicating at this time, with express rehearsal of it, his *own* work and his *own* giving to God. But further, as we shall see, his doing so may have been the suggestion of what he brings next into prominence. *That* is in reality grafted upon his own enterprise and is best introduced by it.

VI. ITS EMPHATIC EXPRESSION OF A DELIGHTED AND UNUSUAL SYMPATHY. Some of the most subtle flattery that the human heart offers to itself, and then most eagerly receives, consists in its very ready assumption of moral and spiritual superiority. The Pharisee, as portrayed by the master Limner himself of human characters, is never extinct. But in form less gross, in effect more insidious, the essence of the Pharisaic spirit perpetually reappears to some degree or other, and in some form or other. To affect a zeal for the good and the right, an appreciation of them, a sympathy with them far in excess of those of others, is a common foible, ay, a vice of the pseudo-spiritual. Nor are there wanting instances where the spread of knowledge, of presentation of facts, in a word, of legitimate inducement, are suppressed, lest an enthusiasm now confined to one or a very few should become general, and lest an envious distinction should be forfeited, born of singularity alone. Sincerity's death-knell is sounding then most surely. But now, if David recite his own zeal, and appeal to the all-searching One to see and try it, he does so in truth to pave the way for delighted and sympathetic celebration of the facts that so many are "like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (1*hil.* ii. 3). To witness the indications of a right state of heart in others, and to witness them with unaffected joy, mark the life of holy sympathies, and the health of one's own spiritual state. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans (i. 32), speaks of it as the direst condemnation of certain that they "not only do" things of the worst moral significance (which might possibly be done under the force of strong present temptation), but that they also "have pleasure in them that do them." St. Paul is there stigmatizing certain immoral sympathies, as marking the depths of deepest degradation. On the other hand, we are prone to slight the value of intense moral sympathies with goodness. But in fact, the presence of these measures the real strength of a new nature very accurately. And the example of David invites our notice of them here. He brings into special prominence the right feeling and the right doing of the people, and utters his own unfeigned joy because of them.

VII. ITS APPROPRIATE AND EARNEST PRAYER. All will fail if it be not "sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer." Feeling, purpose, aspiration, and the right beginning of doing may yet all fall through. Promise may soon die off, or it may die off somewhat later. Only it will die off, unless there be given to it from above the needed element of *perpetuity*. How much there is of the future of ourselves, and of those unspeakably dear to us, which we relegate to the mere domain of hope, flattering, fond, frail, false *hope*! We do so often with mistaken humility, under the impression that we can do nothing else for the future, that we must not allow excessive anxiety about it, that "Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof." But we are then forgetting the force of prayer, and that it is largely of its nature and privilege to "reach a hand through time to catch . . . a far-off interest." David offers prayer, and the *right* prayer. Had his nation but lived by that prayer, their grandeur would have survived, an unparalleled grandeur, to this day. Notice, therefore, in the prayer: 1. How David makes this the one burden of it—that the thing of right present appearance and of happy promise may

be "for ever," may be "established," may be "kept." 2. How he asks that this perpetuity may be derived from deepest source, "the imagination of the thoughts of the heart;" "the stablished heart;" "the perfect heart." 3. How he invokes God by the titles that might by supposed most to move Deity, and most to call his children trustfully and gratefully to his feet. Many a temple, palace, castle, would we build; for many such would we "make provision." But they never *are* builded. And they are not builded because we forget that "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build." And we have left unmade the most necessary "provision" of all, if we have forgotten to sanctify our enterprise by submitting it to the "Lord God of our fathers" and of ourselves, and begging him to give of his own stability and enduringness to those whose hands are to build.

VIII. ITS CLOSE, HEARD AMID THE ECHOES OF ONE UNANIMOUS OUTBURST OF PURE ADORATION. It may be reverently said that the abdicating king—abdicating because he was abdicating the present life—"gave the word, and great was the company of them that published it." The "word" consisted of a summons to "bless the Lord God." And that word was heard and obeyed by the vast throng. Though many an occasion may invite large numbers of mankind to unite to one end, yet in no one employment could the vast family of man so justly, so enthusiastically unite as in a "work and worship so Divine" as here described. Are we not here studying a "type" indeed? Do we not listen herein to rehearsal of what some day—even if "far off, at last"—Heaven shall listen to, as it arises from earth, and of what earth itself shall raise, when earth itself is raised to heaven? *So this service ended.* So we believe the service of earth will end; and so that of heaven begin, never, never to end. God shall be all and in all. He shall be to each and to all the eternal All in all. Oh for the dawning of that moment when, at the signal of an inner impulse, the innumerable congregation itself shall fall prostrate in irrepressible adoring, and as though snatching at this word, "Now bless the Lord your God"!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*Youthful service.* 1. David's words bring before us a tender worker. Solomon was yet young, and his father seemed to regard him as peculiarly insufficient for the position Providence was preparing for him. Perhaps his character thus far was unformed; and it may have been his accession to the throne which was the occasion of his recognizing his responsibilities, and preparing himself for his kingly duties. 2. They bring before us also a great work. The young monarch was to build a palace, not for man, but for God; to carry out a magnificent and costly scheme—a work which should be of lasting importance, both for Israel and the world. There was an apparent want of correspondence between a worker so tender and inexperienced, and a work so vast. Yet it was the Divine appointment that Solomon should build the temple; and events proved that, with God's blessing, he was able to carry out the great undertaking. The lesson of this verse is that there is Divine authority for youthful consecration and service; that there is no real inconsistency between a tender worker and an important work.

I. THERE IS A SUMMONS, ADDRESSED TO THE YOUNG, TO WORK FOR THE LORD. There was nothing peculiar or exceptional in the requirement made of Solomon. The kind of work entrusted to him was special; but there was nothing special in his call to work for the Lord. Every young person who hears the tidings of the gospel, who receives the Divine revelation, is under an obligation to work for Christ. When you enjoy the privileges, you are subjected to the claims, of religion. Jesus, who calls you to rejoice in his love, calls you to engage in his service. In *detail*, God by his providence will point out to you how you may glorify him; in *principle*, the service required of you will be the same as that required of Solomon. A cheerful mind, a willing heart, an unmurmuring submission, a lifelong devotion,—these are what Heaven delights in. A truly Christian life is, in any case, a great work. You have a palace to build for God; and all holy thoughts and righteous deeds and wise and kindly words are as stones in the edifice—an edifice to be reared to God's glory. How many are the admonitions we find in Scripture to youthful piety and consecration!—

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth!" "My son, give me thine heart!" "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the Guide of my youth?"

II. THERE ARE MANY ADVANTAGES IN YOUTHFUL CONSECRATION TO THE LORD'S SERVICE. 1. It is advantageous to the worker. A sound basis is thus laid for a noble character. There is scope for development. A direction is given to the active nature which there will be no occasion to reverse or alter. 2. It is advantageous for the work. There is time for doing it thoroughly and consistently. The youthful worker can adapt himself to the work, and his interest in it will deepen as the years pass on. Youthful enterprise and energy will tend to its vigorous prosecution. Enthusiasm and perseverance combined, under the guidance and with the blessing of the Holy Spirit of God, cannot fail to forward the sacred enterprise, to advance the rearing of the spiritual structure. 3. *It is acceptable to him who provides the work and qualifies the workman.* God cannot but be pleased when his own work is taken in hand and carried on by those whom he himself has designed for it.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSION. 1. Let the young seriously consider the call of Heaven, readily accept the trust, and prayerfully seek guidance and help for its fulfilment. God comes to you and says, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." 2. Let all Christians encompass youthful workers for Christ with interest, sympathy, and supplication. As David commended the young prince, his son, to the considerate sympathy and support of the mighty men, priests, and counsellors, so would we beg all mature and experienced servants of the Lord to uphold their younger friends and colleagues by affectionate interest and prayers.—T.

Ver. 3.—*Affection for God's house.* It would be absurd to compare David's attachment to the projected temple to a Christian's attachment to any material structure. The tabernacle and temple occupied under the old dispensation a position no building can now occupy. The true comparison is with the spiritual temple, the house of God—the great edifice constructed of living stones, even of consecrated hearts.

I. REASONS FOR DAVID'S AFFECTION TO THE LORD'S HOUSE. 1. Mainly his attachment to the Lord himself, in whose honour it was to be reared. 2. Secondly, the fact that the project was one which he himself had formed. 3. And further, his knowledge that the work would be accomplished by his own loved son.

II. PRACTICAL PROOFS OF THIS AFFECTION. 1. His own most liberal gifts in preparation for the work. 2. His encouragement to his people to give with generosity.

III. RESULTS TO THEIR OWN HEARTS. They could not cherish such feelings of interest, affection, and attachment, and manifest their feelings in so practical a way, without reaping some harvest of profit in their own souls. Their deep and disinterested joy in their gifts is an evidence of the benefit which they received. This example should encourage Christians to cherish and display a religious attachment towards the Church purchased by our Saviour's blood.—T.

Ver. 5.—*Consecrated service.* These words are an appeal of David to the nobles, and to the people generally, to contribute towards the building of the temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem. He himself set the example of liberality; and his subjects generally followed the example he gave. "Who then," asked he, "is willing to fill his hand this day unto the Lord?" As these gifts were really an expression of the devotion that animated the hearts of the Israelites, the English Version may be said to offer rather an enlargement than a perversion of the language. And the question is one which may be addressed to all hearers of the gospel. For all are called upon to give themselves and all they have and are unto the God who made them, and the Redeemer who bought them. We have here—

I. A CLAIM AFFIRMED. Religion not only offers a blessing, it requires a service. Salvation is the substance of what God gives; consecration is what God demands. Salvation is from past sin; consecration is for future life and service. God has a right to the surrender of our will, the devotion of our powers, the offering of our possessions, the service of our hands. The heart is his first demand; our labours, our influence, our liberality, will all follow. This is a just claim. It is founded on Divine right and authority; for he is our Creator and King. He has a powerful claim upon our gratitude;

for he has treated us with bounty, and he has given us his Son to redeem us from iniquity and from destruction. We are for ever dependent upon him, who is our Lord and Judge; and, in giving unto him, we do but give him his own.

II. THE RESPONSE EXPECTED. 1. A *willing* response. In fact, there can be no unwilling response. God does not use constraint, and a grudged offering would not be acceptable to him; for it is our affection and devotion that he desires. 2. An *immediate* response. "Who is willing *this day*?" To-day is not too early; to-morrow may be too late. The old have no time to lose. The middle-aged and busy should not leave decision until old age comes, if come it should. But it is chiefly from the young that an immediate acceptance of the invitation of the gospel is desired, that so they may spend a whole life in his delightful service. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."

III. AN APPEAL URGED. "Who is willing?" All who are capable of understanding the entreaty and the ground upon which it is based; all who enjoy religious privileges, who hear God's Word, Christ's gospel, are under a sacred obligation to yield themselves a living sacrifice unto God. Motives, inducements, persuasions,—all are brought to bear upon the soul. A most honourable and happy service, the most desirable recompense, the profoundest satisfaction,—all are proffered to you upon the terms of unconditional surrender, complete consecration. "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"—T.

Ver. 9.—Generosity and joy. There was true unity between king and subjects. It was a national movement in which they joined, and it was a national emotion which they shared.

I. THE CAUSE TO WHICH THEY GAVE. It was their own cause, but in a higher sense it was the Lord's. It was for the glory of Jehovah and for the spread of his worship and obedience that the temple was to be reared; a cause this which justified all their enthusiasm and all their liberality.

II. WHAT THEY GAVE. They offered of their own substance, and according to their several ability; and their gifts were appropriate, costly, and generous.

III. HOW THEY GAVE. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver;" and such givers Israel furnished on this occasion in great abundance. They gave willingly, and not simply in conformity to their sovereign's example. They gave with a perfect heart; *i.e.* from disinterested, devout, and pious motives.

IV. THE CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR GIVING. "They rejoiced." A simple but very expressive account of the feelings of both monarch and subjects. They felt by anticipation the truth of our Lord's saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The selfish and niggardly are ever the miserable; the sympathetic, liberal, and self-denying are ever the happy and lightsome of heart.—T.

Vers. 10—19.—David's blessing. One of the closing acts of David's life was a public acknowledgment of God's favour, and a public entreaty of God's blessing upon his people and upon his son. It was a sacred and solemn act of devotion, and only inferior in sublimity to the invocation and prayer of Solomon upon the occasion of the dedication of the temple. The aged king acted, not only as the civil ruler, but as the religious leader of Israel. Gathering the princes, the warriors, and the multitude together, he, as their representative, offered spiritual sacrifices of adoration, thanksgiving, and prayer before Israel's God. We observe, in this address to Heaven, a combination of the several parts of which devotion should be composed.

I. THE RECOGNITION OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER. In vers. 11 and 12 the attributes of Jehovah are celebrated with devout reverence, and in language of memorable beauty and eloquence. The propriety of such an invocation is manifest. When we draw near to God, it is not simply to bring our sin and want before him; it is to bring his holiness and greatness and beneficence before our minds. The Lord Jesus, in the prayer known as the Lord's Prayer, has given us an example of such adoration; for the petitions are prefaced by a reverent invoking of the Divine Father.

II. THE BLESSING OF GOD'S NAME. The contemplation of God's power, majesty, and dominion fails to produce its due result, unless it awakens our hearts to grateful praise. Ver. 13, "We thank thee, and praise thy glorious Name." Prayer without thanks-

giving cannot be acceptable ; what God has done, what he has given, must be acknowledged by those who have fresh favours to implore.

III. HUMILIATION AND CONFESSiON. The language of vers. 14 and 15 is marvellous for sublimity and pathos, has wrought itself into the speech and the prayers of men. Feeble, finite, dependent, and short-lived denizens of earth, when we come into the presence of the Unchangeable and Eternal, it becomes us to cherish a sense of our utter unworthiness. We cannot even undertake to engage in the service of God without feeling that for that service we are altogether unfit. Confession of sin and humiliation before the All-holy must be part of all truly acceptable devotion.

IV. INTERCESSION. In ver. 18 David prays for Israel at large ; in ver. 19 for his son Solomon. 'For his people the king's chief desire was that the Lord would "prepare their heart unto himself." Their allegiance to Heaven, their spiritual good, their qualification for whatever work God should call them to undertake,—such were the blessings the aged king sought on behalf of his subjects. And for his son, how earnestly and appropriately did he plead ! His prayer was that Solomon's character and his life-work might alike be acceptable to God. A prayer so comprehensive, so devout, so suited to the circumstances in which it was uttered, surely deserves the attentive study of those who would draw near to God in such a spirit as may justify the expectation that he will draw near to them.—T.

Ver. 20.—*Worship.* David was a true leader ; for he not only directed, he preceded his subjects in the path of duty. If he called upon his soldiers to fight, he led them to the field ; if he desired the princes to offer gifts, he first himself gave munificently ; and if he would have his people worship, he himself set them the example. Thus, upon the occasion of presenting offerings towards the building of the temple, the king summoned the inhabitants of Jerusalem together, and in their presence and hearing addressed to Heaven the adorations and petitions recorded in this chapter. Only after this did he use the language of the text, "Now bless the Lord your God."

I. THE NATURE OF WORSHIP: in what worship consists. Worship of some sort has been general among all nations. Revealed religion directs and consecrates what seems a natural tendency ; and both the Old Testament and the New contain many admonitions to, many examples of, true and acceptable worship. 1. True worship is *spiritual*. "God is a Spirit : and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." It consists in the recognition of the Divine attributes, the acknowledgment of the Divine reign, and gratitude for Divine mercies—gifts, forbearance, loving-kindness. Nothing is more hateful to God than the language and posture of worship from which spiritual devotion is absent. Of the insincere he speaks with indignation, "This people draweth near unto me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Silence is compatible with true worship; insincerity is not. 2. A devout heart will find expression for its sentiments. "The people bowed down their heads, and worshipped." Language is an assistance to the intelligent worshipper, though an unuttered aspiration or affection is heard and accepted by God. And attitudes of kneeling, standing, bowing the head, stretching forth the hands, are all appropriate as expressive of the feelings of the devout worshipper. It is only when they are substituted for spiritual worship that they are bad and displeasing to him who searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men.

II. THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP: to whom worship is due. The congregation of Israel "worshipped the Lord, and the king." Yet the homage offered to David was civil, not religious; and there could have been no danger of confusing the one with the other. Whilst the heathen worship "gods many and lords many," to us there is but "one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." The Christian adores and blesses God in Christ. Notice that he is : 1. *Your God.* The Israelites were reminded of this; and we all are summoned to regard him as ours ; for he has made us and redeemed us, and by his own Spirit renewed us, so that we are his and he is ours. 2. And he is also your fathers' God. The Hebrews knew him as "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." And we can exclaim, when we approach him, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." The fact that God made himself known unto the fathers of mankind, that our parents or ancestors knew and acknowledged him, adds a pathos and a power to our prayer.

III. THE WORSHIPPERS. David summoned "all the congregation" to worship, bless, and praise the Lord. 1. All men have *abundant reason* to bless the Lord. He is "good unto all." His bounty, care, watchfulness, and long-suffering, have been experienced by all. No wonder that the psalmist in so many passages calls upon all people—all nations—to praise the Lord; summons young men and maidens, old men and children, to praise the Name of the Lord. 2. All men are in the gospel encouraged to present *acceptable worship to God through Jesus Christ*. The Saviour reveals the Father as the Object of worship, and himself provides the new and living way of access, and offers the intercession which secures Divine acceptance and approval for the believing worshipper. "I will," says the Apostle Paul, "that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

QUESTIONS. 1. Do you worship God yourselves? 2. Do you admonish and encourage others, especially the young, to bless and praise the Lord?—T.

Ver. 22.—*Church and state.* When Solomon was anointed to be chief governor, and Zadok to be priest, Israel acknowledged dependence upon God and loyalty to God in the two realms of civil and ecclesiastical life. The Hebrew nation was a theocracy, and however it may *now* be possible to separate between these two realms, it was not possible *then*. Without entering into any controversy, we may accept from this text the following suggestions:—

I. BOTH CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTICAL LIFE ARE FROM GOD. Our Creator has constituted us social beings, and social we are and must be. By this necessity it is established that mutual help and due order and subordination are from God. All attempts to violate these fundamental principles of human nature have issued in disastrous failure.

II. THE SAME PERSONS ARE UNITED TO BOTH ORGANIZATIONS ALIKE. A man's being a citizen is not inconsistent with his being a member of a Christian Church. So far from there being any incompatibility between the two relations, they are mutually helpful each to the other.

III. IN BOTH RELATIONS MEN NEED REPRESENTATIVES, LEADERS, ADMINISTRATORS. As in Israel there was king and priest, so in modern Christian society we not only need sovereigns, presidents, judges, legislators, etc., but we need also bishops, pastors, moderators, and officers of various kinds.

IV. ORGANIZATIONS AND OFFICIALS, BOTH CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTICAL, ARE INTENDED FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD. The end of such institutions and appointments is to be sought, not in private interests, or emolument, or power, but in the well-being of the body politic.

V. CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTICAL POWERS MAY BE HELPFUL TO EACH OTHER. States are bound to protect the Churches in the profession and propagation of religious faith with all possible liberty. And Christian Churches are under a sacred obligation to seek the order, welfare, and peace of the community. The relations between spiritual springs and political mechanism will often involve difficulty, but from the relations themselves there can be no escape, for they are divinely ordained.—T.

Ver. 28.—*David's death.* Aristotle quotes Solon's saying that no man should be called happy until his end. One reason for this much-controverted dictum, no doubt, was this—that a human life may be marked by prosperity up to a certain point, at which fortune may turn her wheel. This was, of course, not a Christian view of life; we have learned to look at the problem as one rather of character than of fortune, and to sympathize with the estimate of the all-seeing and heart-searching Lord and Judge. The circumstances mentioned in the text must be taken in conjunction with the rest of the narrative, if we would have a scriptural view of David's prosperity and felicity.

I. HIS AGE. "A good old age" is not here what we should call such; for David's life does not seem to have exceeded seventy years. Yet it was not cut short; and, as he was suffered to live for the appointed term of life, he had opportunity to carry out his plans and to see their success. He was, in the expressive Hebraism, "full of days."

II. HIS RICHES. These were acquired by the industry of the population and by the spoils of war. They enabled him to adorn the metropolis which he had won by his sword, and to make preparation for building the temple of his God.

III. HIS HONOUR. He had been raised from the sheepfold to the throne. He had been fortunate in his counsellors and his generals. His victories had given him a widespread renown. And in his spiritual lyrics he had laid, all unwittingly, the foundations of a far wider and more honourable fame. As “the sweet singer of Israel,” and “the man after God’s heart,” he is known throughout the Jewish and the Christian world.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. The life of David is one fitted to encourage our confidence in Divine providence. The man himself felt, and the sacred historians felt, that there never was a more signal instance of an individual being called forth by God’s voice and qualified by Divine discipline for a great work in life. It gives peace and dignity to our life to be ever assured that “our times are in God’s hands,” and that he will use us for his glory. 2. The life of David is a warning against yielding to temptation. He gave way alike to sins of the flesh and to sins of the spirit, and again and again proved his fallibility and infirmity. Well may each reader of his biography lay to heart the lesson: “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;” “Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.” 3. The life of David shows how possible it is to serve God in different ways. He was a soldier, a poet, a king, a religious leader; and in all capacities he glorified God. We may have few gifts, but we may learn that the use of one gift is no excuse for the neglect of another. 4. The life of David reveals the true secret of happiness and usefulness. He was one whose fellowship was much with God; hence his strength. Read his psalms, and you will be convicted that this was so. It is thus that strength and fortitude are to be sustained. 5. The life of David shows us that, during this earthly existence, a good man may begin a good work which shall continue after his death. David did not abide for ever, but he prepared a throne for his son; he did not build the temple, but he put all things in train with a view to the work. Let us live so that when we are no more here others may say, “He being dead yet speaketh.”—T

Ver. 28.—Solomon’s accession. The book which has been so largely occupied with the acts and the reign of David, closes with the accession of his son. It is an exemplification of the old saying, “One generation passeth away and another generation cometh.” Each generation has its own work to do, and has then to make way for its successor. David’s part was to conquer by valour and power; Solomon’s part was to reign in magnificence. David prepared for the temple; Solomon built it. Everything that a father could do to facilitate a son’s work David certainly did for his successor, who entered upon a heritage of peace and power.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF SOLOMON’S THRONE WAS LAID IN RELIGION. They “anointed him unto the Lord;” he “sat on the throne of the Lord.” These expressions, taken in connection with the narrative of the events following Solomon’s accession, indicate that he began his reign in a truly religious spirit, with a desire to consecrate his position and influence to the glory of God.

II. THE COMMENCEMENT OF SOLOMON’S REIGN WAS MARKED BY THE ALLEGIANCE OF THE PRINCES AND THE OBEDIENCE OF THE POPULATION GENERALLY. With conspicuous loyalty the ancient captains and chiefs of David transferred their allegiance to his youthful successor, and the people who had been dazzled into obedience by the exploits of the father, at once and cheerfully submitted to the sway of the son.

III. THE PROGRESS OF SOLOMON’S REIGN WAS DISTINGUISHED BY PROSPERITY AND BY MAJESTY. This glory is by the chronicler justly attributed to the favour of the Lord. The “royal majesty” of the youthful occupant of the throne exceeded anything before known in Israel. The following Book of Chronicles is an abundant proof of this. During the first part, at all events, of this splendid reign, Solomon was faithful to his trust and to his God. He was a type of the Prince of peace, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and whose dominion endureth throughout all generations.—T.

Vers. 1—9.—The path of progress in Christian enterprise. In the history of a nation or of a Church it frequently occurs that some great enterprise has to be carried through, like the building of the temple of the Lord on this great occasion. What, then, are the successive steps in the progress of the work?

I. PERSUASIVENESS on the part of those who project it. David was in a position to

command, to require, to enact. But he evidently felt that this was an occasion on which it was far better to persuade. After pleading the youthfulness of his son (ver. 1), the sacredness of the work (ver. 1), the energy he himself had shown in the matter ("With all my might," ver. 2), the affection he felt, and the personal sacrifices he had made (vers. 3, 4), the consideration he had shown for the various necessities of the case (ver. 5), he appealed to the congregation, "Who then is willing?" If King David, under the Law, thus resorted to persuasion rather than to enactment, much more may we under the gospel. The spirit of the gospel is the spirit of persuasion. We need not wish for "compulsory powers;" we should rejoice that the better way is given us of convincing by argument, of affecting by entreaty, of winning by earnestness. And, on the part of those who are influenced, there must be—

II. WILLINGNESS. "Who then is *willing?*" (ver. 5). "Then the chief of the fathers . . . offered *willingly*" (ver. 6). Nothing is gained of any vital consequence until the heart is *willing*, until every barrier of indifference and objection is broken down, and our will consents to go in the path of service, of contribution, of activity.

III. EAGERNESS. David had shown not only readiness, but eagerness. He "prepared with all his might" (ver. 2); he "set his affection to the house of his God" (ver. 3). The people were not only prepared to respond to the king without demur, they consented *cordially*; "With perfect heart they offered willingly" (ver. 9). A very great step is taken when willingness passes into eagerness; when those whom we ask to serve not only come forward, but walk in the path of usefulness with elastic step, as those who have a heart as well as a hand in the undertaking.

IV. SERVICEABLENESS AND SUITABLENESS. David gave of the spoils of war (ver. 2), and also of his own personal property (ver. 3), things which would be of practical value for the work before them—gold, silver, etc.; so did the people (vers. 7, 8). And not only generally serviceable, but specially suitable things he and they took care to offer; "Gold for things to be made of gold," etc. (ver. 2). David was mindful of the thought that commoner as well as rarer metals would be of use, and he furnished both. We must bring to the work of the Lord (1) that which is practical and precious (gold and silver), that which we esteem as valuable for the purposes of human life; and (2) that particular contribution which the special service demands—not cleverness when kindness is wanted, not learning when sympathy is demanded, not counsel when money is the only thing that will avail, not refinement when rugged simplicity is the desirable thing, etc.; gold for the things of gold, brass for the things of brass, etc.

V. GLADNESS. "Then the people rejoiced" (ver. 9). The outcome of devoted work for Christ and man is heartfelt joy. There is no deeper, stronger, purer joy than that of "consecrating our service unto the Lord" (ver. 5), and doing this with the "perfect heart" of entire willingness, giving ourselves freely and lavishly for him who gave himself for us. It is "more blessed to give than to receive." They who do not know the joy of the people at Jerusalem on this occasion, the joy of hearty devotedness, have not ascended to the summit of human blessedness.

VI. CONTAGIOUSNESS. David communicated his enthusiasm to the people. Their fire of devotion was caught from the flame that was burning on the altar of his heart. Similarly their joy was communicated to him. "The people rejoiced . . . and David the king also rejoiced with great joy" (ver. 9). Unhappily, evil passions are extended through this channel of contagiousness; one mind passes on its sinful principles and unholy excitements. But, happily for the world, goodness is as diffusive as evil. We catch animation, zeal, consecration from one another; we light our lamps from the fire that burns in our brother's heart; we pass on our joy in God till "all the congregation" "rejoice with great joy" in him and in the victory of his cause.—C.

Vers. 10—22.—*Rejoicing before God.* The verses present to us a scene of sacred joy. Israel had seen and would see few happier days than this, and its joy was godly. David's end drew near, and they might, as patriots, have entertained some very serious anxieties as to the future of their country. But all these, if such there were, were forgotten in the joy of devoting themselves to the service of God by large contributions to the house which was soon to rise. Concerning this sacred gladness, we remark—

I. THAT IT RESTED ON CONSCIOUSNESS OF PERSONAL INTEGRITY, and belief in the integrity of others (ver. 17). If we realize that God is one who "tries the heart, and

has pleasure in uprightness," we shall not venture to rejoice if we have not within us that sense of spiritual rectitude which will allow us to say with David, "As for me, in the uprightness of my heart," etc.; with Paul, "I have kept the faith;" with John, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John iii. 21). If we rejoice as those who are members of a community (family, Church, or nation), we must also believe that our fellows also are right in the sight of the heart-searching One, even as David was able to add, "Thy people which are present here."

II. THAT IT WILL BE ACCOMPANIED WITH A SENSE OF OUR OWN LITTLENESS AND UNWORTHINESS. (Vers. 14, 15.) Whatever angelic, heavenly piety may be, that of man on earth always includes humility. In the conscious presence of God we must feel our own nothingness; the exceeding smallness of our brief span of life, "We are strangers before thee and sojourners," etc.; our unworthiness to do anything for the holy and eternal One, "Who am I," etc.? The sense of our own insignificance and ill desert is one of those marks of genuineness which we should see with satisfaction in ourselves and others, the absence of which may well lead us to ask serious questions as to the genuineness of our piety.

III. THAT IT UTTERS ITSELF IN ADORATION. (Vers. 11, 12.) There are no nobler words in which human reverence has found expression before the Divine Sovereign than these. We do not care to analyze them; we use them; we take them on to our own lips as we find them; they perfectly voice our own hearts' homage. All joy before God should be profoundly reverential, and here David gives it simple but admirable utterance.

IV. THAT IT EXPRESSES ITSELF IN THANKSGIVING, and in thankful acknowledgment (vers. 10, 13, 16, 20). David himself "before all the congregation" (ver. 10), and then at his desire all the congregation itself, "blessed the Lord God of their fathers" (ver. 20); he and they thanked and praised him (ver. 13). David freely and frankly acknowledged that, in giving to God, they were but presenting to him that which was his own: "Of thine own have we given thee" (ver. 14). When we contribute to the cause of God we should bear in mind that God claims all that we have; that at any time he may be pleased to resume it; that we do but willingly make over to some special work of his that which he has entrusted to us for his glory and the well-being of his children.

V. THAT IT FINDS AMPLE ROOM FOR PRAYER. (Vers. 18, 19.) In the midst of our gratitude and joy we remember our dependence on God. And this is no jarring note; it does not anywise detract from our thankfulness or our gladness of heart. Let praise always pass into prayer, both for ourselves and (as here) for others, and especially for those whose youth or other insufficiency makes them to be peculiarly in need of help from above.

VI. THAT IT ENDS IN CONSECRATION AND COMMUNION. (Vers. 21, 22.) The whole scene ended in burnt offerings and peace offerings, in sacrifice and sacred festivity. Our piety finds its worthiest expression in devoting ourselves and our substance to the cause and kingdom of Christ, and also in communion with our Lord and with one another.—C.

Vers. 22-30.—*David and Solomon: contrast.* "They made Solomon the son of David king" (ver. 22). "Then Solomon sat on the throne . . . instead of David his father" (ver. 23). "And David died in a good old age . . . and Solomon his son reigned in his stead" (ver. 28). We have our thought directed to the respective virtues of the two kings, father and son, and the comparative value of their life and reign. In some respects they are open to comparison, but in others to contrast. Both were (1) kings of united Israel; (2) servants of Jehovah; (3) writers of inspired and immortal literature. But we are more struck with the contrasts than the likenesses between the two. We gather from a survey of their lives and public careers—

I. THAT THE END AND THE BEGINNING OF A COURSE DO NOT ALWAYS ANSWER TO ONE ANOTHER. Who could have supposed that of the shepherd lad of Bethlehem it would be written, "He died full of days, riches, and honour" (ver. 28); that a prophet of the Lord would write of "his reign and his might" (vers. 29, 30)? His path was an ascending one: from a shepherd he became a victorious combatant, a leader of a band of men, the king of a tribe, the monarch of the land, the sovereign who raised his country to the fulness of its dominion, and impressed on it the love of the Law of the

Lord. Solomon began his course as the chosen heir of the beloved king, “magnified exceedingly in the sight of all Israel,” etc. (ver. 25), receiving the subjection of all within the kingdom, from the court to the peasantry (ver. 24); he ended his career with no little disapproval in the hearts of those who lamented his spiritual defection, and with no little alienation on the part of those who groaned under the exactions of his magnificence. Let us regard the lowly as those whom God may have fitted and destined for rank and power; let those who are exalted by birth and circumstance remember that there is a downward as well as an upward path in estimation and influence.

II. THAT BRILLIANCE IS WORTH LITTLE IN COMPARISON WITH SOLID WORTH. David's reign would compare ill with that of his son in respect of brilliancy. His palaces, his retinue, his table, his exchequer, his navy, the outward grandeur of his reign, were but slight and insignificant in comparison with those of Solomon. But the contribution of David to the unity, consolidation, religious truth, moral excellency of his people was immeasurably greater than that of his brilliant son. In all that is desirable to look back upon at the end of life or from the “other side the river,” David's work was better and nobler far. Far more to be desired the life that adds to the virtue, godliness, strength, stability of the community than the one which flashes beams of brightness that fade with the passing day. Better far than any amount of “royal majesty” is the influence for good which lives in human hearts when ours are still in death, and which tells on human lives when ours are closed for ever.

III. THAT PASSING INCONSISTENCY IS LESS TO BE DREADED THAN CONTINUOUS DECLINE. We still look back with unfeigned regret on the lamentable inconsistencies of David; but these were bitterly repented of, and heartily repudiated by himself, and were forgiven by God. Unmeasurably worse was the steady spiritual decline of Solomon, which took him down from the heights of holiness to the deep and miry places of ungodliness and vice. Best of all, the day wherein the sun shines serenely from morning till evening; but better far the day on which the storm sweeps swiftly by and leaves the heavens clear, than that which begins with a brilliant morning, but passes into a clouded noon, and ends in a starless, drenching night. Strenuously and patiently should we strive against “the one dark hour which brings remorse,” for that leaves a long, deep shadow on the path of life; but with still more devout and determined energy must we contend against “the sin that burns into the blood,” for it is that which decides our destiny, which “will brand us after of whose fold we be.”

IV. THAT DIVINE WISDOM IS LOFTIER THAN HUMAN PRUDENCE, and the service of example than that of painful warning. Solomon's writings are not without many passages of sacred import, but the strain of them is rather human than Divine. They teach us rather how to adjust ourselves to our human relations than how to abide in the favour and rise to the resemblance of God. But David's psalms bear the mark of a Divine hand; they breathe throughout the inspiration of God; they take us up to the throne of the heavenly King; they help us toward the possession of his likeness. Solomon, in his most fascinating work (*Ecclesiastes*), warns his readers from the perilous snare by recounting his own sad experiences. He says to us continually, “Be not as I was; shun the path I trod, that you share not the fate I suffer.” But David, in his immortal songs, invites his readers to *accompany him* along the path of life, to resort with him to the throne of grace; he pours out of a full heart the devotion, gratitude, and sacred joy of which his pages are full, and says for ever to the Church of God, “Walk with me in the way of wisdom, drink with me the waters of life; let us partake, together, the truth which is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb; let us gather, together, the heavenly treasure which will make richer than the fine gold of earth, which will make ‘rich toward God,’ even rich for evermore.”—C.

Vers. 1—5.—*David's further address to the congregation.* David gives an explanation at the commencement of this chapter why he himself had prepared so much for the house of God, viz. that Solomon himself was as yet young and tender, and the work was great. But David assigns the true reason why the work was great, viz. that the house was “not for man, but for the Lord God.” It is true that the house was a great one, and that the work was great in a *natural* point of view. But all such thoughts are lost or sink behind that which alone makes anything great—the Lord,

God. There are two ways of estimating greatness—one that strikes the mere outward sense, and one that looks at God. It may be that the building is only a hut, but if it is to the *Lord* it is infinitely greater than the grandest building ever erected by the art of man. And because it was for the Lord, David had prepared for it “with all his might.” It is this motive which gives power and strength and delight and earnestness to all work. But it was not only as a *king* David had thus prepared. In this world men may separate the office from the person; but not so in the kingdom of God. God’s claims on men are not only official but personal; not only as kings, but as Christian men. David had prepared so much (see ver. 2) as Israel’s king, but he had also prepared so much of “his own proper good” (see ver. 3). A minister of Christ has not only to walk worthy of his vocation as a *minister*, but also as a *man*; not only in the pulpit and parish, but as a man in all the private relations of life. Having fulfilled both of these relations to the house of God, he can now make his appeal to others. He has set the example: who will follow it? “Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?” “Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do” (Phil. iv. 9). And consecration is simply to “fill the hand” (see margin). “He has his hands full” is a familiar saying. Yes; it is every faculty of the man—body, soul, and spirit taken up with the Lord and his work. No room for anything else. Not even a grain more can the hand hold. “To me to live is Christ.” All our secular work done to *him*. Thus life becomes transfigured. And this is not for *to-morrow*. It is “this day.” God asks for it *now*. Two of God’s requirements there are which admit of no *to-morrow*. One is the salvation of the soul: “Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.” Another is consecration—dedication to God: “Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?” It is not so much a *command* as an *appeal*. It must come from the *heart* or it cannot be accepted. “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isa. vi.) is made to the *heart* of the prophet. That heart had “seen the King,” and out of the fulness of a love that had penetrated its inmost recesses it exclaimed, “Here am I, Lord; send me.” So it was here. All the princes and rulers and congregation of Israel responded to this appeal from one whom they loved, and offered largely and “willingly.” No wonder all was joy. The king, the princes, the congregation, were overflowing with joy. It was the response of a “perfect heart,” a true, whole-hearted, joyous surrender of themselves and all they had to the Lord. This is the spring of all real joy. It is nowhere else—an unconditional surrender of ourselves and all we have to him “who loved us and gave himself for us.”—W.

Vers. 10—24.—David’s prayer and blessing. In this blessing we observe how everything is ascribed to God—greatness, power, glory, victory, majesty, riches, honour, the kingdom; all are his and from him. What an exalted view of God is here! And there follows that which always follows on man’s side, “humility” (vers. 14—16). God’s greatness bows down the soul in conscious littleness. We are “strangers,” “sojourners;” our days a “shadow” and “none abiding.” In order, then, to be humble, we should ever have God’s greatness and God’s grace filling the soul. The eye on God, and there is no room for the creature but in the dust. David’s prayers close with one for the people (ver. 18) and one for Solomon (ver. 19). He prays for the congregation, that God would keep them ever in this frame of heart, viz. of willing, joyful, whole-hearted surrender of themselves and all they had to him; and also that their hearts might be ever set towards God himself. For Solomon he prays that God would give him an undivided heart. And this whole-heartedness would show itself *first* in relation to God and his truth—“To keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, thy statutes, and to do all these things;” and secondly, “to build the palace for the which I have made provision.” This is ever the Divine order in David’s mind—*God and his truth first*, and the *work of God* next. And finally, he calls upon the whole assembly to praise the Lord, which they did, bowing before the Lord and the king, and worshipping. In order to seal their confession thus made in word and deed, they proposed a great feast on the following day, consisting of a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with drink offerings and thank offerings to correspond. Thus ended the consecration, the prayer and praise, viz. in joy and “great gladness.” These are ever the results, and there never will be joy and gladness in the Lord without them.—W.

Vers. 26—30.—*David's death.* Our book ends with David's death. He had reigned forty years, viz. seven years and a half in Hebron (1 Kings ii. 11), and thirty-three in Jerusalem. And the Spirit of God writes his obituary: “He died in a good old age.” Many an age is “old,” but not “good.” But David had set God before him through life, and God sets the crown upon it in these words. The Bible obituaries of good men are short. There is no parade, no lengthened record on marble monument or polished stone. They need none. Their record is in heaven. In this they form a striking contrast to the fulsome epitaphs of this world. The greatest of men in Bible history have short records. “So Moses died, and the Lord buried him.” Is that all, and of such a man! Yes; for it is the *life* that should speak and not the *death*; and that life is the character of the *man*, whatever the world may say of his death. “Full of days, riches, and honour,” all worthy of a record because consecrated to God. Our days are only “full” when thus used. What empty days fill up the lives of most around us—days of which an unseen hand has written “vanity,” but for which the soul must give an account to God! It is said here that a record is given of “the times that went over him.” There were “times” of sorrow and “times” of joy, times of trouble and times of rest, times of weakness and times of strength; but when God is in them there are no *empty* days. They were full because God was in them. In the midst of all the changes and chances of this mortal life may such be our days!—W.

Ver. 3.—*Personal sacrifice for God's service.* It is a very easy thing for a man to recognize and admit that people should give of their substance for God's service. And it is as easy a thing to urge other people to do their duty in this respect, and to give for God's service. But it is never for any one an easy thing to do our own duty in this matter, to make our own personal sacrifices, and to take our full, fair, noble share in religious gifts and works. Precisely in this the soundness of David's religious principle is declared. He asked no man to do what he was not prepared to do himself. He would even, by his own personal sacrifices, be an inspiration and help to others; on the example of his own generosity lifting them up to nobler things. David might have satisfied his conscience by devoting to the service of God a portion of that *national* wealth which was entrusted to his keeping as king. We are often tempted to be very liberal with other people's money or with public money. David felt that such giving cost no personal effort or sacrifice, and so could not carry to God the expression of his own devotion and love. Nothing could satisfy his feeling save a large offering from his own personal and private property. This voluntary gift was selected with the greatest care; the gold was that of Ophir, esteemed the finest in the world, and the amount was three thousand talents of gold, and seven thousand talents of refined silver.

I. A MAN HAS WHAT HE MAY CALL HIS “OWN PROPER GOOD.” It is quite true that we really have nothing, and that what we seem to have is God's, and only entrusted to our charge. But it is equally true that God does permit us to cherish the sense of possession, and to feel that some things are *ours*. The distinction between *mine* and *thine* lies at the basis of social morality; and if we can have nothing *ours* as separate from God, we can have something *ours* as separate from our fellow-men. If the distinctness of a man's property is recognized in the common social relations, it may also be recognized in the higher religious spheres; a man's “own proper good” having this for its peculiarity, that it is under the immediate control of the man's own will. Press the importance of recognizing the responsibility attending on the sense of personal possession, and the trust of our “own proper good.”

II. IT IS IN RELATION TO ITS TREATMENT AND USE THAT A MAN'S CHARACTER GAINS EXPRESSION. In public a man makes himself appear oftentimes other than he is. He is revealed in private life. So a man may be very generous indeed in voting away public and society money; and his mean character be shown up in his miserable distributions from his “own proper good.” Money is one of the most searching tests of character. Illustrate how some men *hoard* and reveal their *acquisitiveness*; others *spend wastefully*, and reveal their *sensuality* or love of self-indulgence; yet others *use carefully and thoughtfully*, and so reveal their *caution* and, it may be, the power of their *religious principle*; and yet others again *give largely*, and reveal their *open* and *generous* dispositions. God finds out the very depths of a man's nature by giving to him a greater or less trust “of his own proper good.”

III. IN CONNECTION WITH IT, THE RELIGIOUS PROFESSION GETS ITS SEVEREST TESTINGS. In these days, when wealth is so suddenly acquired, we see too often religious men fail, and become indifferent and worldly. Few can stand the increase of riches. Few, indeed, care to pray Agur's prayer. When men make money, the impulse that grows into a passion is to *keep it from God*, and keep its use to *one's self*. And what God asks is that the growing wealth should be so consecrated to his service that it may help to keep the man's heart true.

Appeal—How would God judge you in respect of your “own proper good”?—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Man but a sojourner.* Before “life and immortality” had been “brought to light,” the brevity of man's life on the earth seems to have caused much distress, even to godly people. There is a wailing tone about many of the Old Testament references to short life and remorseless death that seem but little in advance of the despairings of the pagan, who cried after his passing friend, “Vale, vale, æternum vale!” A few specimens may be given. “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” “All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.” “My days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.” “My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.” “Let me alone; for my days are vanity.” There is, happily, another side to the Old Testament representations, and the pious men of the olden times looked away from swift passing life, and from the sorrow of death and separation, to the unchanging stability of the everlasting God, and the high and eternal hopes that rest upon his gracious provisions and promises. *Transitoriness* is the condition of present being, not for us men only, but also for all the created things with which we have to do. All nature tells of change and passing away; things are here for a little while, and then they vanish away. The winter snow falls lightly, and lies in its white purity—mystic, wonderful—over all the land; but soon it soils and browns and sinks away. The spring flowers that come, responsive to the low sunshine and the gentle breath, are so fragile, and they stay with us but such a little time, and then pass away. The summer blossoms multiply and stand thick over the ground, and they seem strong with their deep rich colouring; and yet they too wither and droop and pass away. The autumn fruits cluster on the tree branches, and grow big, and win their soft rich bloom of ripeness; but they too are plucked in due season, and pass away. The gay dress of varied leafage is soon stripped off by the wild winds; one or two trembling leaves cling long to the outmost boughs, but by-and-by even they fall and pass away. Down every channel of the hillside are borne the crumblings washed from the “everlasting hills,” as we call them, that are, nevertheless, fast passing away. All around us is speaking of change and decay. The writing is on waiting rock and crumbling peak, on the old tower and the ivied wall, the flowing stream and the autumn tints,—‘Here is no rest.’ Man and his world are but sojourners. Recall Coifi, the ancient Briton's, figure of man's brief life as a bird, coming out of the dark and flying through the lighted hall away out into the dark again; and illustrate and enforce the following points:—The brevity of man's life on the earth is designed to—

I. MAKE SERIOUS THE PRESENT. Its voice is, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” It says: 1. What has to be done should be done *quickly*. 2. What has to be done must be done *earnestly*. 3. And seeing the time is so short, and so much has to be accomplished, we need *much grace for the doing*.

II. GLORIFY THE FUTURE. By giving us the assurance that it is the *home* where we are to stay.

III. SET THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE IN RIGHT RELATIONS. Convincing us that we are here for some *important purpose and mission*; and that we are here *on our way home*, getting ready for the life at home by the experiences of our sojourning-time.

Should we then, as Christians, grieve that life is short, and we are only here on earth awhile as the stranger who turns aside to tarry for a night? Surely not, if we keep close home to our hearts the conviction that we are *homeward bound*.—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*The assured acceptance of the sincere.* “Hast pleasure in uprightness.”

It is a characteristic of David that he makes constant appeal to his *conscious integrity* and expects to gain Divine acceptance for his *sincerity* and uprightness. But this, conflicts with the Christian notion that a man cannot be accepted for anything *in himself*, and so it needs consideration and explanation. We have often to notice how certain words get a stiff, rigid, and limited meaning fixed upon them, through their use in the expression of theological opinions and creeds. Illustration may be taken from the terms *grace, law, faith, justify, eternal*. Joubert says, "The trick of personifying words is a fatal source of mischief in theology." The words "integrity," "righteousness," have suffered at the hands of theologians, and their larger and more comprehensive meanings are almost lost sight of. David can stand before God, and appeal to his personal righteousness, and ask to be judged by his integrity. Our Lord implies that a man *may have a righteousness*, when he says, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees," etc. The words will not stiffen into one rigid meaning. Sometimes they mean *right-heartedness, sincerity*, and show us a man at heart centred on God and virtue. At other times they refer to that renewed state into which we are brought by the regenerations of the Holy Ghost. Illustrate the first of these two meanings from David's career. This great impression had been left on him from his own experiences, and to it he gives utterance as life closes: "I know that thou hast *pleasure in uprightness*." Throughout his career—*save in halting moments—David was right at heart*. We have a way of speaking of men as being "good at bottom." If we say that as any excuse for men's sins, we are miserably and shamefully wrong. If we say it with due recognition of human frailty, with fitting discernment of life as the conflict of the human will over the disabilities that surround the man, then it may be a true and worthy expression. Many men around us—yes, even we ourselves—are, like David, "good at bottom." The "desire of our soul is to the Divine Name." We are pilgrims, indeed, who have come in at the gate, and right by the cross, even if men or angels do find us wandering out of the way into By-path meadows, and sleeping in arbours, and losing our rolls. David's example permits us to realize and rejoice in our conscious integrity; not proudly, in any way of self-confidence or self-conceit, but humbly, in a thankful recognition of "grace abounding" to usward. David's sincerity and integrity come out when we compare him with King Saul. Saul failed altogether, and fell away from God, because his sins were *sins of will*; neither his *heart* nor his *life* were right with God. David stumbled, but he did not utterly fall; because, in his case, the will was only *forced* to consent to sin, and it sprang back to God as soon as the force of bodily passion that held it down was removed. David only failed in the *body-sphere*; Saul failed in both the body and the soul spheres. It would have been better indeed if, like Samuel, heart and life had both shown, throughout his career, the harmony of goodness; but God and man recognize the acceptableness of sincerity of heart, even if qualified by some failings of life. But, from the Christian standpoint, it should be earnestly pressed that *sincerity*, which is acceptable to God, is properly one of the after-signs of *Divine renewal*; and that we all need to be *made right*—converted, regenerated—ere we can be *set right* and *kept right*, and dare ask God to search and see whether we are sincerely and wholly *his*.—R. T.

Ver. 28.—*Honoured in death by God and man.* This was the case with King David. "He died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour." With the reverent love of a whole nation round him, they bore him to his royal tomb. "David died, according to Josephus, at the age of seventy. The general sentiment which forbade interment within the habitations of men, gave way in his case, as in that of Samuel. He was "buried in the city of David," in the city which he had made his own, and which could only be honoured, not polluted, by containing his grave. It was, no doubt, hewn in the rocky side of the hill, and became the centre of the catacomb in which his descendants, the kings of Judah, were interred after him." "The only site which is actually consecrated by traditional sentiment as the tomb of David, is the vault underneath the Mussulman Mosque of David, on the southern side of modern Jerusalem. The vault professes to be built above the cavern, and contains only the cenotaph usual in the tombs of Mussulman saints, with the inscription in Arabic, 'O David, whom God has made vicar, rule mankind in truth.'" Observing how honoured in death King David was, and how honoured in memory King David is, though his life was so

checkered and so seriously marred with wilfulness, indulgence, and sin, we are reminded of the lines often quoted from our greatest national poet—

“The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;”

and we ask—Are these lines, in any large and important sense, true; and must we so invert our fixed notions as to admit that the *good* in our lives is temporary and fading, while the *evil* is permanent, and must go on, with its mischievous influences, when we have passed away? We cannot think this. What is true about men—especially such public men as David—may be stated under three headings.

I. **EVERY MAN'S LIFE, WHILE BEING LIVED, IS SUBJECT TO CRITICISM.** We must all accept of this condition. We must not wonder if the criticism finds out and unduly magnifies the *evil* that may be in us. Though often a source of much bitterness and trouble, and often painfully depressing to the earnest man, it is, on the whole, healthy that public men should be thus exposed, and must take count of the fact that their fellows will never let their *wrong-doings* or *wrong teachings* hide away or work in secret. It is more true that the “*evil of a man*” lives while he lives.

II. **IN THE TIME OF A MAN'S DEATH CRITICISM IS DISARMED.** Such a time has a strange calming and solemnizing influence even on political and theological opponents. The “other party” will write sketches of the dead man's life without a trace of bitterness or reference to a disputed topic. Perhaps this was never more strikingly illustrated than at the death of the good Dean Stanley. Touchingly tender and beautiful were the references made to him, and all vied in saying *good* or saying *nothing*. The *good*, not the *evil*, lived after him. And so in David's death-time, all the *evil* and the enmity were put aside, that the nation might do homage to its great and good king.

III. **AFTER DEATH CRITICISM IS KINDLY.** By common consent men try to forget the *evil*, and fix their thoughts only on the *good*. Biographies scarcely even hint the natural weaknesses, the stumblings, or the stains. Nay, a kind of glory-halo gathers round the heroic dead, in which we even lose sight of their infirmities; and so it is the *good* in a man that lives after him.

Then comes the question—Does our homage in death to a man necessarily imply approval of his career? Yes; it does of his career *as a whole*—of the great features of it. Though this must be admitted, that the homage is far oftener rendered to *genius* than to *character*.—R. T.

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